

BHAKTI-YOGA and ISLAM

Airavata Dasa

BHAKTIVEDANTA ACADEMY

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Introduction

"Even the Muslim religion. That is also *bhakti-yoga*. Any religion where God is the target, that is applied in *bhakti*."

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupada

Even now days great bloodshed between Hindus and Muslims in communal riots are still going on. Often people ask, "Why are Hindus and Muslims killing each other and creating more misery and suffering. Why doesn't the Hindu's "*Bhagavan*" and the Muslim's "*Allah*" put a stop to this carnage? While Hindus and Muslims are created by the same God, why do they fight or kill each other? Are they not real brothers? As there is no doubt about their one Creator, who is the father of all entities in the real sense. Why are there different religions? And which one is the best? While Muslims say Islam is the best and only religion, can we say God has created bad religions also? Muslims say Allah never creates anything irrelevant." But nobody has given substantial answers or explanations to these questions.

Neither the Bhagavad-gita is revealed only for the Hindus nor the Qur'an only for the Muslims, yet they are misunderstood to be the scriptures of sections of society who designate themselves as Hindus or Muslims. This grate unfortunate misunderstanding is on account of two obstructions. First is the lack of deep understanding by the readers and teachers of both scriptures. Second deriving from the first is the lack of or non-conveyance of the full message and meaning of both these scriptures to the innocent public at large.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder and spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is a pure empowered devotee of the Supreme Lord having rendered tremendous service on behalf of the Lord on the surface of our planet. He has built a "house" in which everyone and anyone can live regardless of religion, nation, age, sex, color, etc. Srila Prabhupada translated and explained in simple English more than sixty volumes of literature about God and the process (science) of developing love of God. He presented its the authorized way to understand God scientifically and logically. By reading these books thousands and thousands of people came to realize God and make Him a reality in there lives by performing devotional service unto Him. Srila Prabhupada united all nations under the transcendental flag of devotional service to one and only God. He very scientifically presented the origin and meaning of different religions existing on this planet. Srila Prabhupada explained, "When our constitutional position or *dharma* has deteriorated due to the contaminations of matter, the Lord Himself comes as an incarnation or sends some of His confidential servitors. Lord Jesus Christ called himself the "son of God," and so is a representative of the Supreme. Similarly, Hazrat Muhammad identified himself as "a servant" of the Supreme Lord. Thus whenever there is a discrepancy in our constitutional position, the Supreme Lord either comes Himself or sends His representative to inform us of the real position of the living entity."

Srila Prabhupada said: "If you find that following some religious principles you are developing your love of God, then it is perfect. It doesn't matter whether it is the Bible or Qur'an or Bhagavad-gita, it doesn't matter."

So, we can understand that the key to following any scriptural teachings, is to develop our forgotten love for God. Then everything else will be perfect. One cannot truly love God yet disrespect his creation weather that be a human, animal, plant or matter. In all the revealed scriptures sent to us by God, He teaches us the same love of

God. Despite superficial differences between scriptures, the sum and substance of each one is fundamentally the same. God is one, we are all His servants and our primal duty is to render devotional service to Him.

PART ONE

Prophet Muhammad and his religion

"Hazrat Muhammad, the inaugurator of the Islam religion, I accept him as an empowered servant of God because he preached God consciousness in those parts of the world and induced them to accept the authority of God. He is accepted as the servant of God and we have all respect for him."

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupada

In an attempt to share knowledge with our readers we would like to present several conversations which took place between Srila Prabhupada and different people in different parts of the world.

Paris, August 5, 1976

Devotee: Yesterday you have said that Krishna says that He is the taste in water. In the Qur'an it is also said that Allah you can taste in the water. We also see Krishna is in temple. Does this mean also Allah is in the temple? And why are all these religions so different? Because essentially they are all the same.

Prabhupada: You make difference, we don't make. We allow everyone. But you think you are Muslim, "We shall not go." That is your discrimination. We say "Come everyone." You make discrimination. We don't make.

...

Devotee: There is a question I have wanted to ask for many years now. The Vedic culture and the Islamic culture have many similarities.

Prabhupada: So take Muslim or Islamic culture. Just finish. If you are interest in Islamic culture, take it. Just finish. What is the use of comparing, this and that? Why you waste your time? You like Islamic culture, you take it. There is no question of comparing.

Devotee: There are so many similarities.

Prabhupada: That's very nice. You take to Islamic culture. That's very nice. But what is the use of comparing?

Devotee: When one's tasted the higher taste, then how it is possible that he'll fall down in material sense gratification.

Prabhupada: What is that?

Devotee: When one's tasted the higher taste in devotional service how is it possible that he can fall back again in material sense gratification.

Harikesha: When one has tasted a higher taste, how is it that one can fall back down again into material sense gratification?

Prabhupada: There is, that possibility is always. Just like the fire spark. Because it is spark, some way or other, if he falls down from the fire it is extinguished. That possibility is always there. Because it is small, there is possibility of being extinguished.

February 17, 1974, Bombay

Prabhupada: No, no. Christianity is Vaishnavism.

Dr. Patel: Vaishnavism? Absolutely Vaishnavism.

Prabhupada: Anyone who... Islam is also Vaishnavism.

Dr. Patel: Mohammedanism is not Vaishnavism.

Prabhupada: No, no. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had talk with the Pathanas. He proved that “Your religion is Vaishnavism.”

Dr. Patel: Christianity is Vaishnavism 100%.

Prabhupada: Therefore in Chaitanya-charitamrita there is. I have already explained that.

Dr. Patel: No, Christianity is 100% Vaishnavism. I have studied Christianity very well.

Prabhupada: Not hundred percent, but...

Dr. Patel: More or less.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Dr. Patel: Because I have studied the whole of Bible, whole of New Testament and Genesis and everything, very well, just as I have studied the Upanishads. And I have come to realize that Jesus has taught Vedic religion in total, and Christ was nothing but a great saint of ancient Vedic religion. That is my conjecture, my conviction.

Prabhupada: His commandments proved that. He said, “Thou shall not kill.”

Dr. Patel: “Thou shall not kill.”

Prabhupada: Yes.

Dr. Patel: That is *ahimsa*, first principle.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Dr. Patel: You see, *abhaya sattva*. First thing is *abhaya*. *Abhaya-dana*, when you give, it is the greatest *dana*. That is the first principle of all the religions, and that is the religion Christ taught there. The Middle East people and the Europeans had no *samskara*. Those people are very backwards, towards India’s backside. Because of the climatic conditions.

Prabhupada: No, from the First Commandment it appears that they were not very enlightened because why does he say “Thou shall not kill”? That means they were killers.

Dr. Patel: They were killing. (laughs)

Prabhupada: Yes. They were killers.

Dr. Patel: Otherwise, he would not have said, “Thou shall not kill.”

Prabhupada: Why the first commandment is there, “Thou shall not kill”? They were fighting and killing amongst themselves. Not very advanced nation. And he was horrified when he saw that the Jews were killing animals.

Dr. Patel: In the temple.

Prabhupada: Yes! In the temple.

Dr. Patel: Not only that. They were, I mean, doing all that money-changing and taking bribes and all that. I think he...

Prabhupada: Well, that is professional... It is not very important. Everyone takes bribe and everyone is interested in money than anything. That is not very great fault. You see. When you are in the material world, you require money. That is fact.

Dr. Patel: They were not able to understand that he is going to raise another temple. Another temple, that is how the Jews, were against him. I think... That is what my conjecture, no? Another temple means another creed of...

Prabhupada: This is “against” or “for,” this so-called “against” or “for,” it has no meaning. Just like children fight, sometimes against, sometimes for. So it has no meaning. Unless one is raised in the spiritual consciousness, this so-called goodness and badness has no meaning. Chaitanya-charitamrita says, “In the material atmosphere, the so-called goodness and so-called badness, they’re all the same, simply a different type of mental concoction. That’s all.”

Dr. Patel: If nothing but God exists, then bad thing is also God and good thing is also God. **Prabhupada:** Therefore God realization is real good thing.

Dr. Patel: Real good thing.

Prabhupada: Not this, "This is good, this is bad." That is relative world. You'll find everywhere something good.

Dr. Patel: I want to be corrected by you.

Prabhupada: I have already told you, you are *shanta-rasa bhakta*. (break)
...originally, as spirit soul, everyone is Vaishnava. Everyone is Vaishnava.

March 14, 1975, Tehran, Iran

Yoga student: This country, which was, once at one time followed the Aryan path of Zoroastrianism, which is now practices primarily Islam although having absorbed many of the original elements in it. Do you have a recommendation as to how people of this country might feel the grace of Krishna, perhaps even within the forms of their own traditional practice?

Prabhupada: What is that traditional practice?

Yoga student: Apart from Zoroastrianism, the majority of traditional practice now is Islamic of the Shiite sect.

Prabhupada: What is that philosophy?

Yoga student: That involves the prayer of three to five times a day of the Shiist...

Prabhupada: Prayer five times?

Yoga student: Well, it's the Islamic prayer five times a day, but the Shiist compress it to three times. It's the same prayer.

Prabhupada: Why?

Yoga student: Because they are permitted to say two of the prayers at noon and two of the prayers in the evening at one time, rather than spreading them through the afternoon.

Prabhupada: So why they are disobeying the order of Muhammad?

Yoga student: They follow... It's essentially the same practice as the...

Prabhupada: No, you cannot amend on the words of Muhammad if you are a true Mussalman.

Yoga student: I don't think they have to amend it.

Prabhupada: Why? There was five. Why they have made three? That is amendment. You cannot do that.

Yoga student: It has been maintained that Ali..., that this was the practice of Ali.

Prabhupada: What is that?

Yoga student: That Ali prayed at noon, in the afternoon...

Atreya Rishi: Ali, the representative of Muhammad.

Yoga student: He's the brother-in-law..., the son-in-law... Hazrat Ali.

Prabhupada: Ali, Ali. Ali Hussein? No?

Yoga student: Hussein is his son. Ali is the cousin and the son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad. But can they feel the grace of Krishna within this framework, within the framework of their dietary laws and their..., in opening up the experience of Krishna to them?

Prabhupada: No, no. If one wants to follow Qur'an, let him follow strictly that. No halfway mixing.

Yoga student: Then preaching in Iran should be essentially to those people who are fallen away from their traditional path.

Prabhupada: Yes. Everyone is fallen. They are simply amending and concoction. That is not good. Why they should amend?

Yoga student: Muhammad presented himself as the last expression of the divine revelation in the West.

Prabhupada: No, what was his relationship? Just like Christ, he presented himself as the son of God. So what is the position of Muhammad?

Yoga student: He presented himself as a man, as considered by Muslims as the perfect man.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Atreya Rishi: The disciple of God.

Yoga student: And he was the perfect expression of the divine manifestation in human terms. He was not a divine figure as Christ or Krishna, He was simply a man, and who was the mouthpiece of the divine word.

Prabhupada: What is the meaning of *Allah Akbar*?

Yoga student: It means God, the greatest.

Prabhupada: Greatest.

Yoga student: Yes. *Akbar* is being the superlative of *kabirsh*.

Prabhupada: And Muhammad is the greatest? No. He is subordinate.

Yoga student: No. And in fact Muslims object to their religion being called Muhammedanism because it implies that they worship Muhammad, whereas in fact they feel that they go straight to God, to Allah, and that Muhammad simply was a messenger.

Prabhupada: That's good.

Yoga student: And they call their religion Islam, which means submission.

Prabhupada: That's very good.

Yoga student: The Muslim is he who submits.

Prabhupada: Then God is the greatest, and we are finite, limited. We are not greatest. And our business is to serve Him. What is that?

Yoga student: Our business is to serve Him. Precisely as was said last night, our business is to satisfy Him.

Prabhupada: That's it.

Yoga student: There is a tradition, and there's a body of forty traditions, which are called the sacred traditions, one of which says that these are the words of God as enunciated through Muhammad, one of them saying that "The more you strive towards Me, the more you love Me, the closer I come to you."

Prabhupada: Oh, that's it. Then the ultimate goal is how to love God.

Yoga student: Yes.

Prabhupada: That is very good. That is our philosophy. *Sa vai pumsam paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokshaje. Prema pumartho mahan*. This is the highest goal of life, how one has developed his love for God. And Bhagavatam says, "That is first-class religion which trains the followers how to love God and serve Him." That is first-class religion. Then Islam is Vaishnava *dharma* in a crude form like the Christian. So we can amalgamate them all if they are sane men. I suggested that there are many churches vacant. If they give us these churches we shall install Deity—Gaurasundara, Nitai-Gaura and Panca-tattva—and along with them we shall worship Lord Jesus Christ also. Similarly, we can do Muhammad. There is no harm. But they are against this Deity worship, eh? Muslims?

Yoga student: Yes, they are. That sort of expression. And yet, amongst the Sufi poets...

Prabhupada: Deity is also expression, form is also expression, but they do not understand it.

Yoga student: But the Sufis do, because in the Sufi...

Prabhupada: They have got form worship, Sufis?

Yoga student: They don't worship form as such, but they speak of it in the poetry. In one poem of Hafez there's a meeting between Hafez and his spiritual master. And he asks the spiritual master (recites verse in Parsi). He asked, "I asked him, 'What was this current, this chain of idols that we must worship?' And he replied so that my heart might moan, lament about the dark night..."

Prabhupada: Oh, "dark night."

Yoga student: "Separation from God." So that he used the form of expression of worship.

Prabhupada: Separation, how it is possible? Separation is expressed when there is separation between man to man or man to woman, person. Otherwise what is the meaning of separation?

Yoga student: Separation from one's divine...

Prabhupada: Divine? This means must be person. They do not believe in the Personality of Godhead?

Yoga student: They believe. The Sufis see the personality of Ali.

Prabhupada: No, I am not talking of the Sufis. I am talking of the original Islam.

Yoga student: Well, the Sufis claim to be the original Muslims.

Prabhupada: Do the all the Muslims accept them?

Parivrajakacharya: There are about 780 different schools of Islam and different ideas.

Prabhupada: Then we have to take the original. Otherwise misled.

Yoga student: Well, I think the original path must be found in Sufism.

Prabhupada: Then, if the original path is followed, why it is named Sufism?

Yoga student: Because there are those who have fallen away from it, just as in...

Prabhupada: Who has fallen, the Islam or the Sufist?

Yoga student: I think the formalists have fallen away, like the *jnanis* in Hinduism. Just as there's a dispute between the Shaivites and the Vaishnavites.

Prabhupada: So who are fallen, the original Islam or the Sufist?

Yoga student: The Sufis are the original Islam.

Prabhupada: Sufis? What? I do not follow. Sufis?

Nitai: Sufis are the original.

Prabhupada: Original cult?

Nitai: Yes, that's what he said.

Prabhupada: Before Muhammad?

Yoga student: No, springing from Muhammad.

Prabhupada: Then how you can say it is original?

Yoga student: It is original. All the schools of laws, they've developed...

Prabhupada: No, if it is the original, why they named differently?

Yoga student: Because there are those who have fallen away from it, and they are the ones who use this name. The Sufis don't use the name about themselves. It's used by others who wish to...

Prabhupada: What is the meaning of Sufism? Literary meaning?

Yoga student: Well, Sufism in a sense is what bhaktism is in the Hindu context.

Prabhupada: *Bhakti* means to offer service to the Lord. Does it mean?

Yoga student: Absolutely.

Prabhupada: So then if the Lord is to be served, then He must be a person; otherwise where is the question of service?

Yoga student: Well, the Sufis do see that, the personal aspect of the Lord.

Prabhupada: Unless one is person, how can I serve him? I cannot serve the air or the sky. I must serve a person. Love does not exist in the sky or in the air. It must be a

person. Man or woman, it doesn't matter. Otherwise where there is love? Whom to love?

Yoga student: The Sufis find love in these figures... For example, the Sufi ibn Araby, through of the face of a beautiful woman...

Prabhupada: Through the face of beautiful woman?

Yoga student: Yes.

Prabhupada: So there the materialists also find.

Yoga student: That is the material aspect, absolutely.

Prabhupada: Therefore in Islam religion the form is rejected because it will come to that. As soon as they think of form, they think of this material form, beautiful face of woman. That is degradation. Therefore we are strict not to conceive material form. That is Vedic conception. *Apani-padah javano grahita*: "He has no legs and no hands." This means denying the form. And next Vedas says, *javano grahita*: "He can accept whatever you offer to Him." That means God has no material form, but He has form; otherwise how He can accept? How He can understand my love? So therefore in the original Islamism the form is not accepted. So that is Vedic description, form and formless. Formless means no material form, and form means spiritual form, simultaneous. Just like I am, you are. I am within the body, but I am not this body. This form not I am. But wherefrom the form of the body came into existence? Because I have got form. The sweater has got hand because I have got hand. The sweater is the covering. If I haven't got form, then how the sweater has got hand, the pant has got leg? So the pant practically is not the leg. The real leg is within the pant. Similarly, this is not my form; this is like pant, leg of the pant or hand of the coat. Real form is within, *asmin dehe*. That is not material form. If the real form I could see, you could see, then there was no controversy, the spirit. But they cannot see. Therefore they say "formless." If it is formless, then how the outer form comes out? How it can be? The tailor makes the coat because the man has got form. As the coat has got hands, so it is concluded that the man for whom the coat is made, he has got form. How you can say without form? The difficulty is that we can see the form of the coat, but we cannot see the form of the man. That is my defect with the eyes, not that the God is formless. God is not formless.

Yoga student: God is seen in the form of the saints.

Prabhupada: That is another. That is secondary. But God has got form. That is the conclusion. But we cannot see with our present eyes. That is described, *atah sri-krishna-namadi na bhaved grahyam indriyaih*. By your these blunt senses... The same thing. Just like I see you. What I see you? Your body. You see me—my body. And when the body is there and the soul is not there, then it is lump of matter. You kick it out and nobody will protest. If a dead body you smash with your legs and boots, nobody will say that "Why you are doing this?" But so long the soul is there, if somebody is smashed like that, immediately there will be protest from all side, "Why you are doing this?" So the people have no knowledge about the real form. Therefore they say formless.

Atreya Rishi: When the body changes, Srila Prabhupada, how is it...? When our coat, size of the coat changes because our body grows bigger, the size of the coat is bigger. Shirt is bigger.

Prabhupada: Yes. That is spiritual form. It can take... It can become bigger, smaller, like that.

Atreya Rishi: But the form is the same. (break)

Prabhupada: Body has been described as the dress. So the form of the dress cannot be there unless there is form of the person who puts on the dress. How can you deny it? Because the dress has got form, the person who puts on the dress must have form.

How can you deny this argument? You cannot say “formless.” It may be, you cannot see it. That is different thing. But it must be form and individual. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita, that Krishna says, “Arjuna, you and Me and all these persons who are here, they were existing like that in the past, they are now existing, and they will exist in the same way.” Therefore all are individual.

Yoga student: With Krishna can one say that Krishna is the form that presents itself, of Godhead, which presents itself to man, and *Bhagavan* is the essential aspect?

Prabhupada: *Bhagavan*? Yes, in the original.

Atreya Rishi: Same as Krishna?

Prabhupada: Just like the sun. Sunshine is very big, and the sun globe is not so big. But which is important, the sunshine or the sun globe?

Yoga student: But it’s the glow which reaches man.

Prabhupada: Eh, these are example.

...

Prabhupada: Formerly your country was part of India, and you belong to the same culture. So far I understand, Iran means Aryan? So Aryan culture was practically all over the world. Aryan culture is based on God consciousness. So amongst the Aryans there is some conception of religion, either Christian religion or Muslim religion, Buddhist religion, Vedic religion, based on conception of God. So according to time, country, the ways of understanding may be little different, but the aim is God consciousness. That is Aryan civilization. So God is one; God cannot be two. So the features of God or angle of vision of God may be different. So they have been summarized in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. One feature of God is impersonal. Just like the sunshine. Sunshine is spreading all over the universe. It is impersonal. But the quality of the sunshine is heat and light. The heat and light means energy. So as in the material calculation, the heat and light is the cause of all creation. Just like at the present moment there is not sufficient heat; therefore the trees have no leaves. And as soon as there will be little more heat they will be all green. So you can take it that the creation of the foliage is due to the heat. Similarly light. So heat and light is the cause of all this material creation. And heat and light is coming from the sunshine, or sun. Therefore heat becomes the origin of creation even in this material world. Similarly, there is another light. That is the original light. This is reflection. That is called *brahmajyoti*, spiritual light. So in this way one conception of God is like that. Another conception of God is: God is situated everywhere. Because God is situated within the universe, within the atom, therefore they are existing. Just like the *atma*, or spirit soul, is situated in you, in me, in everyone. This is called *Paramatma* feature. And at the ultimate end there is the person, God as person, the Supreme Person, the Supreme Being, a person like you and me—we are person—but He is almighty, all-powerful. This is the conception of Absolute Truth: God, *Paramatma*, and *Brahmajyoti*. *Brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti shabdyate*. This is the Sanskrit word. He is realized as *Brahman*, *Paramatma*, and *Bhagavan*. *Bhagavan* is person; *Paramatma* is all-pervading, means localized, situated; and *Brahman* means all-pervading. All together—God. This is the idea. What is your idea of God?

Young man: I find it very difficult to know the difference between truth and illusion.

Prabhupada: God is truth; what is forgetfulness of God, that is illusion. God is truth. Just like the sun is present all the time, twenty-four hours. But we say now there is no sun, at night. But that’s not the fact. The fact is the sun is there; I cannot see. That is illusion. Not that God is not there. God is there. As exactly, same example, the sun is there at night, but I cannot see under certain condition. Therefore it is illusion. Our senses are imperfect; therefore sometimes we cannot understand or see God. If our senses are purified, then we can see God every moment. So, what is your idea of God?

Young man: Something that I see sometimes in everything, the sameness in everything.

Prabhupada: No clear concept.

Young man: I have no clear concept.

Prabhupada: Yes. The clear conception of God is that originally He is person. Just like the same example, the sun. We can see every day the sun. The sun is there always, but at night we cannot see. At night we cannot see. That does not mean the sun is not there.

Young man: But sharpening the senses, how does one sharpen one's senses?

Prabhupada: Senses are imperfect. Just like we are very proud of our eyes to see, but you cannot see what is beyond the wall. Therefore it is conditioned. You cannot see without light. That, how you can be sure that your eyes are perfectly seeing? That is not possible, because the eyes can see under certain condition. So if it is conditioned, then it is not perfect. But the conditioned sight can be purified. Just like one is suffering from cataract. By surgical operation the cataract can be removed and he can see. Similarly, our senses are imperfect. If we purify the senses, then it will be possible to see God twenty-four hours. That purification process is this Krishna consciousness movement.

Young man: Are human beings the only creations that can have Krishna consciousness?

Prabhupada: Yes. Krishna consciousness means God consciousness. The cats and dogs cannot be trained up. But a human being can be trained up. Especially the Aryans, they can be trained up. They are advanced.

Young man: More advanced than other races?

Prabhupada: By birth they are advanced. They have got intelligence. But for Krishna consciousness everyone can be purified, even the non-Aryans. It is without any check. *Ahaituky apratihata*. *Apratihata* means without any material check. It is not a disqualification that one is not an Aryan, therefore he cannot understand God. No. He can also be trained up. Because it is spiritual, and we are all spiritual identities, so it is not difficult. Even one who is not spiritual at the present moment, but by training he can also become spiritual.

...

Young man: I'd like to know the relation between Vishnu and Krishna, how Vishnu became Krishna.

Prabhupada: Krishna is the Supreme Being, and He has got many expansion. So Vishnu is also expansion.

*ramadi-murtishu kala-niyamena tishthan
nanavataram akarod bhuvaneshu kintu
krishnah svayam samabhavat paramah puman yo
govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami*

This is in the Vedas, Brahma-samhita. *Krishnah svayam sama*. Krishna means the original. And He expands in so many forms, *ramadi-murtishu*: Rama, Nrisimha, Varaha, Vishnu, Sankarshana, Balarama—so many thousands. But the original person is Krishna. (Pause) Therefore I asked, "What is the idea of God?" I suppose you are all Muslim.

Young man: We were brought up as Muslims.

Prabhupada: So what is the conception of God in Islam?

Young man: Even as a Muslim, I didn't have very good teaching. My teachers didn't know the Qur'an very well, and therefore they gave me no concept of God when I was a child. I don't know what the Muslim concept of God is.

Prabhupada: Any one of you cannot explain? You have got?

Young man: I think it's the all-powerful one who's omnipotent, the same as in all religions. There is one God.

Prabhupada: So His form... What is the form?

Young man: What is His form? He created the world...

Prabhupada: That is His action. What is His form?

Young man: A heavenly being.

Young man (2): There is no form given for God. It's spiritual.

Prabhupada: The description must be there.

Girl: He's a human being. He's got a human form.

Prabhupada: That I am asking, what is the form?

Young man: Well, the only thing... It just says that He created man after His own image.

Prabhupada: That is the Christian idea.

Young man: Yeah.

Prabhupada: The Muslim, Islam also same idea?

Young man: Well, since the Old Testament, part of the Old Testament, is very similar to the Qur'an. I presume the creation of Adam, that bit, is also taken from the Old Testament. But He is projected as a great judge really, a supreme judge.

Prabhupada: Yes, He must be the supreme judge because He is Supreme Being. Supreme judge means supreme knowledge.

Young man: Yes. Somehow in modern religion they very much emphasize on the fact that He judges. And I could never accept that idea for example, that the Supreme Being judges, because judging is a low activity. Spiritual people don't judge.

Prabhupada: Spiritual?

Young man: Leader.

Prabhupada: They do not judge?

Young man: That's what I thought.

Prabhupada: No, judgment is there everywhere. Unless there is judgment, how you can discriminate, "This is spiritual; this is material"? Judgment must be there for intelligent person. Otherwise how you can distinguish? We are distinguishing every moment—"This is good. This is bad"—in the relative world. So there is judgment. So God—the supreme judge. So as soon as there is question of judgment, then what is our position? There must be good and bad, so that if we have lived a very nice, good life, then by the judgment of God we get better position. And if we have not done so, then you get degraded position. Therefore, for human being it is very sanguine to understand how we are going to be judged by the Supreme. So if we are following the rules and regulation given by God, then the judgment will be better. And if we are not following the laws, the judgment will not be in favor. This is natural to conclude. Then we have to judge what is sin, what is piety, how to be pious, how one becomes sinful. So many things will come.

...

Young man: If one does not lose one's identity when one is returned to the Godhead, what is the nature of the relationship?

Prabhupada: Servant. God is supreme, we are all subordinate. God is maintaining us just like father maintains. So it is the duty of the son to be obedient to the father, to act according to his order. Then everything is perfect. At the present moment on account of this bodily concept of life every one of us thinking nationality and duty of nation,

duty of the community, duty of the family, so many duties. But actually we, being spiritual, our only duty is to serve God. We are serving; everyone is serving. That is our constitutional position, to serve. But at the present moment we are serving *maya*, illusion, and we have to be trained up to serve the Supreme Being. Then our life is perfect. At the present moment, although there are many religious system, they have no clear conception of God, although religion means to approach God. There is no religion throughout the whole world which is not connected with the word *God*. So religion means to understand God. But if we have no clear conception of God, then the religion is defective. Do you admit it or not? Religion means to understand God or God's laws. That is religion. But if we do not understand what is God, then that religion is also defective. So far our position is, we are approaching directly God through His agent, and our conception of God is there in the temple worship or our working for God. But we have got no vague idea of God. We have got complete idea: Krishna. You want to speak anything?

Young man: What is the Krishna conscious outlook on other world religions?

Prabhupada: They have got simply an idea that there is God, but what is that God, they have no clear conception. Just like I asked, "What is the conception of God in Islam?" You could not give us. You simply described some of His activities.

Young man: That's true.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Young man: All the religions that have been taught to me have not given me a clear view of God, a clear concept. They didn't seem to know it themselves.

Prabhupada: No, concept is there as you told me: "The God has made human being after His own image." Then we can get the idea that God is a person like a human being, He has got two hands, two legs, one head, because after His image we have been... Now, if we study ourselves and increase that quality... Just like I am. I can eat. I can eat a certain amount of foodstuff, but God can also eat, but He can eat the whole universe. So eating is there. But the difference of eating is there also. I can create one airplane, but God has created very, very big airplanes like these planets, and they are floating in the sky without any power crisis. That is God's creation. Here we are floating the airplane or running the car with the power, petrol, given by God. You cannot manufacture petrol. Just like in your country there is enough stock of petrol. But you have not created it. So who has created? Your creative power is to drill and get the stock. So much creative power you have got. But you cannot create petrol. Then the Americans would not have come here to beg petrol. That is the difference. You can create something by the ingredients given by God. You can create this table. Because wood is given by God, the instrument is given by God, and the intelligence given by God, the hand is given by God, so in this way you create the table. Then whose property it will be, your property or God's property? Whose property? If I give you wood, instrument, your salary, and you create something, the ultimately the thing created, to whom it should belong? To you or to me?

Young man: To you if you're...

Prabhupada: Yes. Therefore everything belongs to God. The petrol belongs to God; the land belongs to God; we also belong to God. But because we have forgotten God, there is crisis. Therefore, if you want peace, then you must accept here this principle that everything belongs to God. That is Vedic information. *Ishavasyam idam sarvam*. Ishopanishad. You have read our Ishopanishad?

Young man: I have read some of it.

Prabhupada: Here is the Ishopanishad. Show him. *Ishavasyam idam sarvam*. Read that verse.

Shrutakirti:

*ishavasyam idam sarvam
yat kincha jagatyam jagat
tena tyaktena bhunjitha
ma gridhah kasya svid dhanam*

“Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one must not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.”

...

Guest: There is some our *acharyas*. How about Christ or Muhammad and Zaratustra, all these people?

Prabhupada: They accept God, that’s all. But God is here explained. They cannot give an explicit idea of God. But here is God speaking personally. They have got “There is God,” “God is great.” That’s nice. But who is that God, how He is great, that they have to learn further. Simply a vague idea, that “God is great”. One should know how He is great and who is that great. That is perfection. So that is explained here. They accept God. They are also our brother because they accept God. They are not atheist. Atheists, they don’t accept God. “There is no God”—that is atheist. But here they are theist. They accept God. They want to please God. They go to the church, go to the mosque, offer prayer. Prayer is also *bhakti*, devotional service. *Shravanam kirtanam vishnoh smaranam pada-sevanam, archanam vandanam dasyam. Vandanam.* The Christian way or the Muslim way, to offer prayer. The Muslim offer obeisances and offer prayer. So that is also *bhakti*. The Christian also do that, so that is also *bhakti*. And they accept God; we accept God. So there is no difference. But the only point is who is that God.

Guest: They accept as supreme power.

Prabhupada: No, supreme power must be there. Behind the power there must be powerful.

Guest: They say powerful but what about...

Prabhupada: Yes, then we have to know this powerful, not only the power. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita. *Mayadhyakshena prakritih suyate sa-characharam.* In another place, *srishti-sthiti-pralaya-sadhana-shaktir eka chayeve yasya bhuvanani bibharti durga. Durga* is power. What kind of power? *Srishti-sthiti-pralaya-sadhana-shaktir eka.* She can create, she can maintain and she can destroy, so powerful. But this power, *srishti-sthiti-pralaya-sadhana-shaktir eka chayeve*, is working just like shadow. Just like here is shadow. I am moving this hand; the shadow is moving. Shadow is not independently moving. Therefore this gigantic power, material energy, is working under the direction of Krishna. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita, *mayadhyakshena*: “under My superintendence.” So we are allured with the power, but who is manipulating this power we do not know. That is God.

...

Guest: I have three points. First of all, I have seen nothing in Bhagavad-gita, although it is a work of the most beautiful of all these books which are attributed to God and are supposed to be spoken in the name of God. But sincerely there is nothing in Bhagavad-gita about God which you cannot find similar passage, a passage similar to it in Koran or in other teachings. That’s my first point. The second point is that if we believe to God and we believe that the God has spoken only through Bhagavad-gita to a people who live in a given country, then we are going to have a very narrow-minded God who doesn’t love all human beings.

Prabhupada: No. No there. Here, here I impress...

Guest: He has bestowed all His love to a given people. And my third point is that if we believe God as a life force or who must be discovered by a human being and the human being who has to proceed toward this truth, then also we have no reason to confine this into one people.

Indian man: Swamiji, I may take your leave.

Prabhupada: (Hindi) Why you are going soon?

Indian man: I have to go still far off.

Prabhupada: Oh, all right. *Jaya. Jaya.*

Guest: So I think what we have in Islam is... They say that the road, the way towards God, the ways are many, as many as the human beings, that is said. So in the number of human beings you have ways towards God. So everybody, each person, has his own way towards God. And it's really hard for me, difficult for me to believe that there's only one way and there is only one book and one school, one way of teaching.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Guest: And when Muhammad said that God is great, he simply said God is great, and he adds nothing to it for somebody who is well acquainted with Islam culture and he who knows well about Qur'an's teachings, it cannot be understood and accepted. It is the same with somebody who is well acquainted with Christianity and the truth spoken through Christianity. It is the same with the Buddhism or other ways which are designed, which are...

Prabhupada: So your point is that God is understood in different ways. That is not the point?

Atreya Rishi: That's one of his points.

Prabhupada: And what is the other point?

Atreya Rishi: That all the scriptures speak of the same truth. Scriptures coming from God speak of the same truth that is in Bhagavad-gita. And all the scriptures give a real path to God, as many as individuals as there are, there are ways of getting to God, and that God could not be fair if He just gave one book at one time to one group of people.

Prabhupada: No, just like dictionary. The small pocket dictionary is also dictionary, and the international dictionary, Webs, that is also dictionary. So both of them are dictionary, but they are not equal. One dictionary is meant for children and one dictionary is meant for the higher scholars. So although are dictionaries, they are two kinds of dictionaries.

Guest: Do you know, sir, that it is exactly the same way of thinking which we have in our people who believe to Muhammad? They think that the teaching of Muhammad is the most superior one. And others... Of course, Muslims do believe to others' religions, to Moses, to Christ, and so on. They have the same way of thinking. They think that they are elementary stages...

Prabhupada: The point is... Yes.

Guest: ...and Muhammad's teaching is supposed to be the superior one. So everybody thinks that his way or his way of thinking, his theory, his religion is the most superior one.

Prabhupada: That's all right. That is all right. If you accept progress... Just like you are seeing the sun, I am also seeing the sun, the boy is also seeing the sun, but the understanding of the sun may be different. Everyone is seeing the sun. The objective is the same. But a child's understanding of sun and an elderly man's understanding of sun, a scientist's understanding of sun, or one man who has actually gone to the sun planet, there are different categories. Do you accept or not? The sun is there. God is accepted in every scripture. That is a fact. But in the same way, how far He is understood, that is different. That is different. The same example, that everyone is

seeing sun: "Here is sun," there is no doubt. But a child's understanding of sun, his father's understanding of sun, or a scientist's understanding of sun, or a person who has gone to the sun planet, his understanding of sun is different. The objective is the same. And everyone is right. Either you understand fully sun or not, as soon as you come before the sun you get the light. The child is getting the light, the scientist is getting the light, and the ordinary person getting the light. Everyone is getting light, heat and light. But their understanding different, of degrees.

Guest: From what you have said in the answer to this gentleman, I thought you meant, sir, when the only perfect...

Prabhupada: No.

Guest: ...teaching about God is provided through the sun.

Prabhupada: No, just like if you want to understand sun, say... what is called? Geography? Then you have to learn from the person who knows geography. You cannot learn from a person who has superficially studied. Then you have to go to the person who knows scientifically, astronomically, that sun is fourteen hundred thousand times bigger than this planet. You have to go to the astronomer. How far the sun is situated from us? So you have to go to the particular person who knows it. You cannot say that his knowledge and the child's knowledge, who is seeing the sun as a disc is the same. That you cannot say. If you want to know further enlightenment of the sun then you have to go to the person who is studying sun scientifically. So one who has studied the sun scientifically, his knowledge and a casual person seeing the sun, his knowledge is not the same. That you cannot say. Although everyone is seeing the sun, that's all right, but the knowledge of the sun, there are different.

Devotee: That seems to answer all of your three points at once.

Atreya Rishi: One thing here is that we are not talking about religion or designation.

Guest: In that case I think we have no (indistinct).

Atreya Rishi: Yes, it's not a religion.

Prabhupada: No, if you want to study something, and suppose you are sometimes from India, the same subject he's going to study in foreign country, farther enlightenment, it is also not necessary that to study a subject matter more and more, we have to remain in the same jurisdiction. If I am actually anxious to know more and more, it doesn't matter whether I get the knowledge from Muslim or Hindu or Christian, it doesn't matter. Knowledge is knowledge. When a student goes from one country to another to get farther enlightenment on a subject matter, he does not think that "I'll have to learn it from here, from my university." For knowledge, progress of knowledge, you can go to any university. Because knowledge must be scientific. It is not restricted within the jurisdiction of a particular university. So, sun we are seeing, everyone, the sun, getting heat and light but if anyone is interested (to) know how the heat is coming, how the light is coming, what is the situation of the sun globe, whether there are living entities or not. They're also subject matter. So if you can get enlightenment of the sun, we should not restrict ourselves that we have to study with this jurisdiction of my university, or my country, or my society. If the knowledge is there, we should be prepared to go forward. Mm.

Lady: If we believe in God as the Supreme Being... I have a question. Why do we wish to God, to Krishna movement in chanting worldly name because the name of God is something which is eternal.

Prabhupada: Hold on, then, what is the name of God?

Lady: Right, in Christianity there is written: "In the beginning was the word, the word was with God, and the word was God."

Prabhupada: That's all right. But what is the name of God?

Lady: In Islamic religion, they say...

Prabhupada: No, what is the name of God? Islam is the system of religion, but what is the name of God?

Lady: The name of God is something which is always with God, constantly with God.

Prabhupada: That means you do not know that. You do not know that.

Lady: I do know that...

Prabhupada: Then why don't you say?

Lady: ...experience the name of God...

Guest: It's very similar to what we have got in Bhagavad-gita. He says, "You call it Allah..."

Prabhupada: That's all right.

Guest: "...or you call it Rahman, whatever name you call it, He has all nicest names." So all nicest name are His.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Guest: That's what we have got in...

Prabhupada: Well, I accept, I accept that all the, that's all right, all the nicest name. So Krishna means all-attractive. Is it not very nice? Just reply whether this Krishna name is nice or not?

Guest: Yes, of course. Nobody is against Krishna.

Prabhupada: Then chant it. Then chant it.

Guest: Everybody loves Krishna and...

Prabhupada: No, no, if you accept Krishna name is nice, then chant it.

Guest: I don't think that point is...

Prabhupada: No, you say God has got the nicest name.

Guest: Yes.

Prabhupada: I say...

Guest: But the name is just an indication, the name is something we call it, it is for us to have a word.

Prabhupada: But that I ask you, that what is that name? As I have... We have got the nicest name, Krishna. Now you suggest that this is the nicest name in Islam, Krishna. You say me that.

Atreya Rishi: Allah.

Prabhupada: You say, "What is that name?"

Guest: First of all, this man is talking (indistinct) any difference to call it Allah.

Prabhupada: No, no, I don't make any difference but I want to know, I want to know what is that nicest name. I don't make any difference.

Guest: Well, it's called (indistinct) they call it Allah.

Prabhupada: That's all right. Then our request is that you chant the name of God. So if Allah is the name of God, you chant Allah, don't chant Krishna. We say that.

Lady: The name of God is not something could be spoken to (indistinct), it is unspoken.

Prabhupada: No, we don't accept that. Name means it can be spoken. (guests all speak at once) Not commentary, name means that... When I call you by your name, it is spoken. It is spoken. I know your name... If I say I cannot speak it. (laughter)

Guest: ...is for me to designate me because it is...

Prabhupada: No, you have said that God's name is Allah, that is accepted. Very good. And we request you...

Guest: ...means of communication.

Prabhupada: Eh?

Guest: Just, not that, no, a word Allah is not to God, it is a means of communication.

Prabhupada: Whatever it may be, you have accepted the name of God as Allah, is it not?

Atreya Rishi: But he's saying that their name is material, it's different...

Prabhupada: No, no, then you have no idea of God. God is not material. God is not material.

Guest: Well, you have said though have a lion, lion who lives in the forest and you write lion.

Prabhupada: That is material, that is material.

Guest: What you write here is not the true lion. Is, is a way of communication, you put it here in words.

Prabhupada: Lion is, lion is material, and his name is also material, but God is not material. God is spiritual. Therefore His name is spiritual.

Guest: We accept that.

Prabhupada: As spiritual... (two of the guests speak at once)

Guest: What do you think about the spirit?

Guest (2): Soul, human soul, soul is not material, but when you write it, it's a word, a material word.

Atreya Rishi: Yes, but the name of God, we accept as the same quality as God. If it is a concocted name, then it's not the same quality. But if it is the name of God, given to us by God, or by His representatives, we accept that as good as God and that is the philosophy behind chanting. Otherwise why chant?

Guest: Well, it's a very old teaching. We have got it.

Atreya Rishi: I know you have it, accept it. Accept it. There is no question, just accept it. It doesn't matter if you have got it, or I have got it.

Guest: You attribute some sort of mysterious attributes to word, to certain word.

Atreya Rishi: None. There is only...

Guest: They are created by the human being.

Atreya Rishi: It is not created by human being.

Guest: It is because it does..., it differs from one country to from one language to other language.

Atreya Rishi: God, God has many, many names like it says in Qur'an.

Guest: Yes, but one name in Turkish when you say Tanri, in Arabic when you say Allah, in French, in English, in Sanskrit. So these are different words.

Prabhupada: But...

Atreya Rishi: Those are names.

Guest: These different things are created by human beings.

Atreya Rishi: We are talking about one name which is to describe the concept of God. When we are also talking about the name of God. In other words, if I don't know who you are, I have to ask somebody, "What is his name?" That is your name.

Guest: But my name is my name in Turkey, in English, in Arabic, in anywhere you go.

Prabhupada: That's all right, then let the Turkish chant the name of Turkish name.

Guest: But God, the name is different.

Atreya Rishi: Yes, But if you find what his name is,...

Prabhupada: But the name must be chanted that is our program. It may be Turkish name, it may be Arabic name, it may be Sanskrit name. Whatever he knows let him chant. That is our program.

Atreya Rishi: But the concept of name of God is separate than designation, which you are talking about. Man-made designation. And this concept, if you don't accept this concept, how do you accept the concept of chanting in Islam. These are the points. Bhagavad-gita also. There are so many concepts in there, but we want to interpret them all, we don't want to accept them. We want to accept our mind. Prabhupada, what he has been saying all evening is: "Let's accept Bhagavad-gita as authority. Let's

accept Qur'an as authority. Let's accept an authority." Because we want to go by our senses. We want to go around modern...

Guest: Yes, (indistinct) as authorities.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Atreya Rishi: But let us accept it. I accept them and they are still the victim of my interpretation. If we accept them, what is this? That let's not interpret that God's name is just a designation just like my name. It's just a word.

Guest: Name cannot be perfect. Name of name cannot be perfect.

Atreya Rishi: Well, then we are talking about the difference...

Guest: Something is something else.

Atreya Rishi: What is it?

Guest: You are entitled to chant the name of your beloved, that is something else. It does not mean different stages with the name...

Atreya Rishi: But who is this beloved? Who is this beloved? Who is this beloved? Who is this beloved?

Guest: In our case, God.

Atreya Rishi: So this name of God is different... If God is transcendental, if God is spiritual then how could His name be committed to our relative conceptions.

Prabhupada: ...indicates God, then it is not bad. That is our point. If we indicates to God... Just like Allah. If this name indicates to God, then it is this Allah word as good as God. There is no difference. *Namnam akari bahudha nija sarva shakti*. The Allah, the conception of Allah means the Great, is it not? So God is Great. So by chanting Allah, I am meaning God, the Supreme Person, so it is as good. And actually in Mosque, they chant *Allah-u-Akbar*, like that, so far I've heard. So that prayer, if it is not God's name, then what is the use of this prayer? That is God's name. Similarly, the Hindus may chant Hare Krishna, they're indicating to the same personality. It may be different language; therefore, it is as good as God because God is absolute. But this, this name is authorize because Muhammad said that you chant, "Allah." So it is authorized, because he is God's representative. Therefore my request is, or our request is that you chant the name of Allah. We don't say that you chant Krishna. You chant the Holy name of God. If Allah is approved name of God, you chant it. That is our request. We don't force you that you chant the name of Krishna. No, we don't say that. If somebody says Jehovah is the name of God, that's all right, you chant Jehovah. Allah is the name of God, that's all right, you do it. We simply request that you chant the holy name of God. That's all. If you have got it, we don't force you that you chant the name of Krishna. That is not our way. We accept: if Allah is God's name, it is as good as the name Krishna. We are not so sophisticated that you have to chant this Krishna's name. No, we say: *Harer nama*. That is the *shastra*, *harer nama*. The name of the Lord. So there are many thousands of names, that's a fact. So you actually chant the name of God. Pick up of the millions of God's name, whatever you like, you pick up and chant. That is our propagation.

*harer nama harer nama harer nama eva kevalam
kalau nasty eva, nasty eva, nasty eva gathir anyatha*

In this age of quarrel and disagreement, God realization is very difficult; therefore, you chant the Holy name of God, then you'll gradually realize Him. This is our program. So we don't force you that you chant this name Krishna. No, *shastra* says, *harer nama*, the holy name of God, chant. That is our program.

Lady: Before you ask with something else. I ask, how could you meet the Supreme being by chanting...

Prabhupada: By chanting, yes.

Lady: ...by chanting of worldly name, tuned on prayer...

Prabhupada: That is not worldly name. Why do you mistake that? God's name is not worldly.

Lady: Because if you, if you really know the tuning of God...

Prabhupada: Do you think Allah is worldly name?

Lady: We recognize that it is before Krishna...

Prabhupada: That's all right, you recognize it. Allah, Allah is not worldly name. It is given by the authority Muhammad so you have to chant it, who knows God.

Lady: But he didn't really mean Allah is the name of God.

Prabhupada: Why do you say he didn't mean?

Lady: Because...

Prabhupada: That is you say. Muhammad did not say that "What I say, I did not mean it."

Lady: No, the name of God. He didn't mean Allah.

Prabhupada: You say, you say. Who cares for your word? Muhammad said this is the name of God. We have to accept, that's all.

Lady: So why...

Prabhupada: You cannot say he didn't mean. You are not a private secretary of Muhammad. (laughter)

Lady: So then how do they say that the name of God rests in God.

Prabhupada: No, these things are not accepted.

Lady: Was before God.

Prabhupada: Don't talk childish.

Lady: Was God.

Prabhupada: Muhammad said. That is authority. That we accept. We accept Muhammad as the representative of God. Whatever he says, we accept, that's all. What you meant, that is his business. But he is authority, he said that "This is the name of God. You chant, you pray." Allah or God. That's all. That is authority.

Guest: Is it also good to chant the name of a person who is holy, who is one with God, not the name of God.

Prabhupada: That you have to find out, but here it is already there. Why should do trouble to find out a holy man, another holy man? The holy man never says, Muhammad never said that "You chant my name." We have to test whether he is holy man or not. Here is the perfect holy man. He never said that "You chant my name." He said "Chant Allah's name." That is holy man. That is test of holy man. He does not become God, he serves God. That is holy man. All right. Take, give *prasadam*. All right.

Devotee: We have a feast.

Prabhupada: All right.

Devotee: Thank you Srila Prabhupada.

Prabhupada: Thank you very much. (devotees pay obeisances, and some guests leave) *Jaya*, Hare Krishna. *Jaya*. (break)

Devotee: *Jaya*, Srila Prabhupada.

Prabhupada: We accept Muhammad's authority. That's a fact. He's authority.

Bombay, September 30, 1975

Dr. Patel: In Punjab there was lot of Muslim hierarchy, and that is what they wanted, that... *Arya-samajes*.

Prabhupada: But we are not against any “ism,” either Muslimism or Christianity. This Krishna consciousness, we never preach against anyone.

Dr. Patel: It was a socio-economic problem or socio-political, not a religious problem.

Prabhupada: Whatever it may be, but we never criticize anyone. When the Christians come forward—“Whether our Christian religion can also give the same meaning”—“Yes, why not?” Yes.

Dr. Patel: It has the same *bhakti*.

Prabhupada: I never said...

Dr. Patel: I think the Christianity is nothing but *bhagavata-dharma*. It has been preached in a different way.

Prabhupada: They inquire, “What is your opinion of Jesus Christ?” And “He is our guru.”

Dr. Patel: It’s a fact.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Dr. Patel: The Christians don’t know that we take it like that.

Prabhupada: Even if we say “Muhammad,” why not? Anyone who has preached Krishna consciousness, maybe little differently according to time, circumstances, but anyone who has tried to preach the God consciousness, he is guru. *Yei krishna tattva vetti, sei guru haya*. That is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s version. Anyone who preaches about the Supreme Lord, he is guru. Maybe in a different way, according to time, circumstances. The Muhammad also said *Allah Akbar*.

Dr. Patel: Only the difference is that Muhammad is trying to worship *niranjana, nirakara*, and we...

Prabhupada: No, no, not *nirakara*. That is not...

Dr. Patel: Even Christianity considers His *akara*—“God has form.”

Prabhupada: No, Mohammed also has got... Chaitanya Mahaprabhu argued in Qur’an. He proved there is *krishna-bhakti*. He proved with the Pathans. Yes.

Dr. Patel: Otherwise the Christianity is just our way, I mean, absolutely Vaishnavism. It has been wrongly preached and wrongly initiated in India. That is why it has fallen to disrepute. Otherwise Christianity is just *Vaishnava-dharma*. Nothing else, to my mind, the way I have studied, I mean the New Testament and all the Christian, all the things. Now, the sermon of Christ is nothing but the preaching of Bhagavad-gita.

Prabhupada: I never criticized. I simply said that positive side, God consciousness.

Dr. Patel: Christ himself was drunk with God consciousness totally.

Prabhupada: Eh?

Dr. Patel: Christ himself was drunk with God consciousness *in toto*, absolute.... There cannot be a higher *bhakta* than that. It is said that Jesus Christ learned all these things in India. It might be a fact?

Tehran, August, 12, 1976

Atreya Rishi: In Iran most people accept all our philosophy fully, but they are not willing to accept authority from Krishna because they say, well, why is... They cannot be convinced that Krishna is the original Personality of Godhead, Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Prabhupada: Then there is proof: *shastra* (the scripture) is there, *sadhu* (the saint) is there, *acharya* (the preceptor) is there, other authorities are there. Just like Arjuna said, that, quoted Vyasa, Narada, Asita, Devala, “All of them have accepted You the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and You are explaining Yourself. Therefore I have no doubt.” Vyasadeva is authority, Narada is authority, and there are many others.

Recently, all the *acharyas*, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. We are following the Chaitanya cult, but He's stated *yare dekha tare kaha 'krishna'-upadesha*. He's accepting. Why does He say "Krishna"? Why does He not say others? *Amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desha yare desha, tare kaha*. And Krishna also, *mattah paratara nanyat*, "There is no more superior person." And Arjuna accepted, "Whatever You are saying, it is all reasonable." *Sarvam etad rita manye*. "Whatever you have said, I accept *in toto*." There is no cut short, "I don't like this, I don't accept this." No, everything, *sarvam etad*.

Atreya Rishi: The basic difference still is that they are saying that Krishna, God, whatever you call Him, He..., the *parampara* system starts from Him sending a representative, and then that representative has devotees and devotees, like that. But we also say that that is true, but also there is, you could...

Prabhupada: Bring that wrapper.

Atreya Rishi: That is true, but also we could have *parampara* go all the way to Krishna Himself.

Prabhupada: Yes, *parampara* is coming from Krishna.

Nava-yauvana: In Islam they say that God cannot come to this earth.

Atreya Rishi: God would not come to this earth.

Prabhupada: God cannot speak? God cannot come. A very big man, he can come, but He cannot speak?

Atreya Rishi: They agree. He can speak and He can send representatives.

Prabhupada: Because He has spoken to Muhammad, and Muhammad has come, he is speaking the same thing. So recently... There is no need of God's coming. If Muhammad is speaking on behalf of God, then that is all right. There is no need of God's coming. This is *parampara*.

Atreya Rishi: That they agree. And they also agree that that *parampara* is lost. They agree with that because they can see there is nobody who can represent Muhammad. There is not a single person. They agree.

Prabhupada: No, that is everywhere.

Atreya Rishi: In every religion it is true.

Prabhupada: Just like these rascals, Bhagavad-gita they explain in a different way. What Krishna says, rejected. He says something else. That is the difficulty—*parampara* is lost.

Atreya Rishi: And the most convincing argument that Your Divine Grace is making is that we are not just talking, we are also acting. That is the big difference between our philosophy and all the others. Because there are many good philosophies, but they all finish in talk.

Prabhupada: Talking, that's all.

Atreya Rishi: Perfect philosophy, but talk.

Prabhupada: The scientists also, they are talking, but there is no practical proof. Simply talking.

Columbus, May 12, 1969

Prabhupada: Now, take for example the Muslim's name Allah. Allah means the greatest. So God is greatest. So that greatest conception is this Brahman conception. And so far Christian, I don't think they have got any particular name. They say God.

Allen Ginsberg: Yes. Lord, God. That is the basic one.

Prabhupada: Controller. God means controller. Is it not?

Allen Ginsberg: What is the etymology of God? Do you know?

Hayagriva: I don't know.

Prabhupada: God is the equivalent of *ishvara*. *Ishvara* means controller.

Allen Ginsberg: Then the Jews, which were my background, had a prohibition...

Prabhupada: Jehovah.

Allen Ginsberg: They had Jehovah, but they had a prohibition of pronouncing the highest names. Because they felt that God was imageless, and therefore should not be pronounced or painted. My background is I guess what would be impersonalist.

Hayagriva: The Jews are personalist.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, what are they? Impersonalists or personalists?

Lady: Impersonalists. They believe in just the Absolute. That's all.

Prabhupada: That was the difference in Jesus Christ. He was a personalist.

Devotee: Hasidics are personal.

Allen Ginsberg: Yes. They put their devotion into the *rabbi* or the *guru*. The ancient Hebrew... I guess you must know about that. The ancient Hebrew teaching was that the name of God should never be pronounced.

Prabhupada: Now we come to know...

Allen Ginsberg: J-H-V-H.

Prabhupada: Anyway why God's name...

Allen Ginsberg: Pictures should not be made. Pictures should not be made. Because it would limit God to human conception.

Prabhupada: That is another thing. That is in Islam. That means God is not material. That is the idea. Because here the idea is when I make something image or picture, that is material. So there is a prohibition of accepting God as material. But if you go to a higher stage, then you'll understand that if God is everything then there is no material. That is Vaishnava philosophy. If God is everything, then where is material? He is spiritual. Material means when you cannot understand God. That is material. Everything is sky. When it is covered by cloud we call it is cloudy. Similarly, cloud has no existence. It comes only to cover sometimes, but the sky is eternal. Similarly, God is eternal. When you are covered by some *maya* (illusion), you cannot see, you cannot understand God, that is material. So any philosophy which does not help understanding God, that is material. That is material. Otherwise, there is no material. Where is material if God is everything? *Sarvam khalv idam brahma*. You see?

Hayagriva: All spirits.

Prabhupada: All spirit. All the sky. Everywhere is sky, but when it's covered it is called cloud. Similarly when God is covered by some nonsense ideas, then it is material. Otherwise, there is no material. Therefore those who are too much absorbed in materialistic way, there is a restriction but don't attempt. Because he will be to think that God's name is just like my son's name my daughter's name. Therefore that restriction.

Bhuvaneshwar, January 30, 1977

Prabhupada: Oh. In the dictionary it is clearly stated, "God the Supreme Being." So He is a being, but supreme. And what are the signs of supremacy? One must be very rich, very famous, very strong, very learned. In this way analyze. So God means one who is in possession of all these things, all the reputation, all the beauty. That is God. On this point discuss. Now, who is God, that is to be found. But this is the position of God. Try to convince them.

Prithu-putra: Because they are convinced already about this through the Qur'an. They already accept God is one, and He is possessing all fame, all beauty. But they say...

The only point is that He cannot come down to the earth because the earth is a planet of sin.

Prabhupada: No, that is your not perfect conception. If He is almighty and He is all-powerful, why you restrict Him?

Prithu-putra: They say, "No, He is not restricted. But when He has to reveal Himself He reveals to the prophet. This is the reason why Muhammad received the instruction from God."

Prabhupada: That's all right. That's all right. But you cannot say that He does not come to showing mercy to a prophet. He may come if He likes. That is mission. *Paritranaya sadhunam*. One who is actually devotee, prophet, he is always anxious to see what they (indistinct). So in order to favor them, (Sanskrit). What is their proposition?

Prithu-putra: In the story of Qur'an they say Muhammad once asked to see God, and God is answer was, "You are not able to see Me."

Prabhupada: That's all right. At least he could hear Him. So that is possible. Not that necessarily one has to see Him, but he can hear Him. Now, you have said that Muhammad heard Him, so God can speak. So you can hear. So where is the objection?

Prithu-putra: No objection.

Prabhupada: Muhammad... If somebody can hear Him, somebody can see Him also. You cannot deny because they're all senses. To hear God means with my senses we appreciate Him. Similarly, eyes are also one of the senses. Now if somebody sees Him, where is the objection? If somebody can hear Him, where is the objection if somebody can see Him? Reasonably, there is no objection. In this way... So God is omnipotent. If some of His prophet devotees wants to hear Him, he can do that, if wants to see Him, he can do that.

Prithu-putra: But they think the prophet as an ordinary man who received the mercy from the Lord.

Prabhupada: Yes. Without being... Without being favored by the God, how one can become prophet? Then he is ordinary man.

Prithu-putra: But they say he was an ordinary man like us up to the time that God revealed Himself to him.

Prabhupada: Now, suppose Muhammad has heard God. He is prophet. So whatever he is speaking about his experience, you are accepting. Similarly, if somebody has seen Him, if he says that "God is like this", why you should not accept? In this way talk. God can be seen as God can be heard. You cannot say that God cannot be seen. Why?

Prithu-putra: No, what they say is that He Himself doesn't come down here. He can be seen, but He doesn't come down. That is their point.

Prabhupada: That's his... He doesn't come down. He is already there. He does not come down. Just like the sun. The sun does not come down before me, but you can see him. In this way give them enlightenment. Sun doesn't require to come down, but sun is so bright and so prominent that you can see. Similarly, God doesn't require to come down. He is already present. Simply we have to make our eyes to see Him. *Premanjana-churita-bhakti-vilochanena*. When one is competent enough by developing his love for God, he can see always. God is visible everywhere. *Antara-stha-paramanu-chayantara-stham*. *Ishvara sarva-bhutanam hrid-deshe 'rjuna tishthati*. He is everywhere. So there is no difficulty to see. But simply one has to possess such purified eyes to see Him. Otherwise He can be seen anywhere. He can be seen within the atom even. *Antara-stha-paramanu-chayantara-stham*. That is God. He is present everywhere, but we must have the purified eyes to see, we must have the purified ears to hear Him. Otherwise God is everywhere.

Prithu-putra: So in order to purify their vision, chanting and *prasada* will be sufficient.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Prithu-putra: We should not talk about following rules and things like this.

Prabhupada: No. When there is talk, then you can talk reasonably, that "If God can be heard, God can be seen also, God can be touched also, to a different prophet."

San-Francisco, April 5, 1967

Prabhupada: So Chand Kazi also replied that "Cow killing is also not generally recommended in the Qur'an. Actually, beef-eating or flesh-eating is not in the higher stage. But those who are inclined to take flesh, for them it is recommended that instead of killing many small animals, one big animal should be killed. So actually in Mecca, Medina, they kill camel. That is also in the mosque." So the substance of his speech was that flesh-eating ultimately is not recommended. "But those who have no other means, they eat flesh and they recommend that one big animal should be killed. So India, the cow is big animal, therefore we kill. But that is not recommended for advanced spiritual students."

Geneva, June 4, 1974

Prabhupada: Buddha is *shaktyavesha-avatara*. We accept Lord Jesus Christ also, *shaktyavesha-avatara*; Muhammad, *shaktyavesha-avatara*. *Shaktyavesha-avatara* means a living entity especially empowered and he preaches the philosophy on behalf of God. That is called *shaktyavesha-avatara*.

...

The Muhammad also said, "From this day, there is no sex with your mother." So just see what class of men. So according to class of men, there should be teaching. Similarly, Buddha also, Lord Buddha said, "No, no, there is no God. Just try to understand me. You obey Me." "Yes, sir." It has to be done like that.

PART TWO

Bhakti-Yoga And Islam

“Islam is also Vaishnavism.”

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupada

Traveling through Jordan I met a very sincere Muslim scholar, by name Muhammad Ali. He was very humble and sincerely trying to follow the path of religion. A discussion took place between us from which I would like to present a part of the conversation for the attention of the readers.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: According to Muslim tradition only God, Allah deserves worship, nothing else besides Allah can be worshipped - no man, no angel, no *jinn* (evil spirit), etc. But Hindus worship the *guru* or spiritual master, by bowing down in front of him and worshipping him like God. Muslims cannot accept this!

Airavata Dasa: Yes. According to Vedic scriptures God is one, the Supreme Being and only He should be worshipped and loved. But His pure devotee, His bonafide representative should also be honored and respected because he presents God. For example, the viceroy is received with great respect because he is a representative of the king. If the viceroy is neglected, the king will not be happy. Similarly if a pure devotee of God is neglected, God gets angry. I would like to present some quotations from the 2nd *sura*, *ayats* 30 to 34 of the Qur'an:

30. And when thy Lord said unto the angels: “Lo! I am about to place a viceroy on earth.” They said: “Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?” He said: “I know what ye know not.”

31. And He taught Adam the names of all things, then He showed them to the angels, and said: “Tell me of the names of these, if ye are right.”

32. They said: “Glory to Thee! Of knowledge we have none, but what You have taught us. In truth it is You who is perfect in knowledge and wisdom.”

33. He said: "O Adam! Inform them of their names." When he had informed them of their names, Allah said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth? And I know that which you reveal and which you conceal."

34. And when We said unto the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam", they fell prostrate, all but Iblis. He refused through pride, and so became a disbeliever."

From this narration we can understand that when Allah revealed some confidential knowledge to Adam, he became so great that even angels worshipped and bowed down before him. The original word used in the Qur'an signifies properly to prostrate one's self, until the forehead touches the ground, which is the humblest posture of adoration. Also this word means "worship". But one angel, namely Iblis, rejected the worship of Adam out of pride and became a disbeliever. But more than this in the 17th *sura* of the Qur'an it is said:

61. And when We said unto the angels: "Fall down prostrate before Adam" and they fell prostrate all but Iblis, he said: "Shall I fall prostrate at that which You have created from clay?"

62. He said: "Seest Thou this (creature) whom You have honored above me, if You give me grace until the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway - all but a few."

63. Allah said: "Go and whosoever of them followeth thee - Lo! hell will be your payment, ample payment."

So, because Iblis rejected worship of Adam, as ordered by Allah and he became a disbeliever, so was banished from heaven and was told by Allah that his payment will be hell.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: But Adam was a special human being, he was the progenitor of mankind.

Airavata Dasa: Of course. There is one famous story from the life of Hazrat Muhammad. Once, in the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic activity, he invited his relatives, delivered a sermon, and ended his speech by the following words, "Allah ordered me to invite you on this path of Truth. Who from you is ready to follow me and become my brother, helper and heir?" Everyone kept silent but suddenly Ali, the youngest son of Abu-Talib, Hazrat Muhammad's uncle, came forward and said: O messenger of Allah! I will be your helper!" Hazrat Muhammad embraced him and said to the assembly, "He is my brother, my helper and my heir! Pay attention to his words and worship him!" (Muhammad Peygambarin hayate. Azerbaijan Dovlat Nashriyate, Baku, 1990, p. 54)

We know from the lifestory of Ali that he became a great devotee of Allah but Muhammad recognized him even before, and advised everyone to worship him. The point is that pure devotees of God are always worshipable amongst all Muslims, Christians or followers of Vedic tradition. One very famous Vedic scholar, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada said that if someone claims "I am God", then he is a dog. A bonafide *guru* or spiritual master never claims that "I am God". He says, "I am the servant of God". Then he is a bonafide *guru*. The point is that a bonafide *guru* is a pure devotee of God, he surrenders himself to Allah's will, constantly engages in the devotional service of the Lord, and teaches others by his example. Because of this he is respected, and he is worshipable. What is the problem?

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Yes, now I understand. *Guru* is a pure devotee of Allah, and because of this he is worshipable.

Airavata Dasa: Yes. Real *guru* or spiritual master never asks worship for himself, but he always invites people to worship God, Allah. He teaches us how to worship God, because *guru* knows the desires of God. He is the representative of God. Like Hazrat Muhammad, he is a messenger of God and people respect him and honor him. But pure devotees don't like people glorifying and worshipping them. For example, a great devotee and *guru*, Gaura Kishora Dasa Babaji Maharaja would run away and hide himself when people tried to worship and glorify him. Similarly, when people tried to worship Hazrat Muhammad, he prevented them and forbade them from doing so.

When people worship a *guru*, he is never bewildered because he is a pure servant of God. He understands that this worship is meant for God and that he is acting just as a intermediary for all the offerings to Allah according to the will of Allah.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: I see, I see. It is acceptable. But why is *guru* required, why can we not approach Allah directly?

Airavata Dasa: It is obvious. The example of Hazrat Muhammad is very prominent. Before Hazrat Muhammad came forward and started to preach, nobody worshipped Allah. The ancient Arabs, despite having information about Allah being the Supreme God, worshipped idols and had terrible customs and rituals. Even in the beginning of Hazrat Muhammad's preaching activity, his tribesmen did not accept him and they even tried to kill him. But after a while when he became successful, they accepted him. Actually Hazrat Muhammad was the spiritual master or *guru* of the Arabs, without whom they would have never been able to arise from their degraded conditions. The spiritual master is a transparent medium, through whom we can understand God, worship God and eventually see God.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Now it is clearer for me. But you mentioned that we can see God. Is it possible to see Allah?

Airavata Dasa: Yes. It is possible to see Allah in this world and in the next. In this world the possibility to see Allah has been granted to Hazrat Muhammad. Once, before Hazrat Muhammad's departure to Medina, he ascended to heaven in the night, attended the abode of Allah and saw how Allah sat on the Throne. Hazrat Muhammad spoke with Allah, received instructions from Him and then returned to earth. In the future world however all believers will see Allah. Some Muslim scholars say the eyes only, some say the whole face, while others say every part of His spiritual body. There are particular verses in the Qur'an which prove this: "Some faces that day, will beam (in brightness and beauty), looking towards their Lord." (75.22-23)

Dr. Muhammad Ali - What do you mean Allah has body and limbs?

Airavata Dasa: Yes, we can find many evidences in the Qur'an. *Allah* said:

"Build the ship under Our eyes and by Our inspiration. ..." (11.37)

"Everything will perish but His (Allah's) face" (30.38)

"He (Allah) said: O Iblis! What hindereth you from falling prostrate before that which I have created with My hands." (38.75)

These verses prove the existence of Allah's eyes, face and hands.

In the Qur'an it is also written that,

"Allah is Seer of what you do." (2.233)

"Allah is Hearer, Knower." (2.224)

"Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories." (35.24)

From these verses we can see that Allah can see, hear, and speak, which means He has eyes, ears and mouth.

Also we can find in the Qur'an the following sentences:

"His is the Sublime Image in the heavens and in the earth" (30.27) First of all, this means that Allah has an exalted, Supreme Image. Secondly, amongst all images in the heavens and the earth His Image is the most Sublime.

There are excellent verses in the Brahma-samhita :

*ishvarah paramah Krishnah
sach-chid-ananda vigraha
anadir adir govindah
sarva-karana-karanam*

"Krishna, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal, blissful, spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes."

In his explanations to this verse, prominent Sanskrit scholar Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura says that Krishna is the exalted Supreme Entity having His eternal name, eternal form, eternal attributes and eternal pastimes. The very name "Krishna" implies His love-attracting designation, expressing by His eternal nomenclature the acme of entity. His eternal, beautiful, heavenly, blue-tinged body glowing with the intensity of ever-existing knowledge has a flute in both His hands.

There is also a particular verse in the Qur'an:

"He (Allah) established Himself upon the Throne, directing all things." (10.3)

When Hazrat Muhammad attended Allah's sanctuary, he saw Allah sitting upon the Throne. Hazrat Muhammad stood there in front of Allah and Allah stretched out His hands and placed one on his shoulders and the other on his chest.

On the revelations of the Qur'an, Hazrat Muhammad said that sometimes Allah came to him in his dreams, placed His hand on his shoulders and proclaimed His will.

And also Muadh-bin-Jabal said, that once Hazrat Muhammad came to the mosque very late and explained that he saw Allah "in a most lovely form."

Finally we can mention that in the tradition from Bukhari and Muslim, once the Prophet of Islam said, "Allah created Adam in His own image."

For God to be God, he has to be perfect and complete. To be complete, God has to have everything. If God has no form, He would be incomplete (which He is not). Therefore God has a form. To be perfect God also has to be omnipresent. He has to be present throughout the entire creation. He is actually present in all living beings, in all nonliving objects e.g. in stones and earth. In fact he is in every single atom. Thus it follows that God has an eternal form, a personality, and is present everywhere.

From all the evidence we can come to a firm conclusion that Allah does not have a material body like the ordinary living beings in this material world, but He has a supreme, transcendental, spiritual Form which we can not fully describe, understand or imagine unless He chooses to reveal it to us.

Dr. Muhammad Ali - If His spiritual Form is beyond description then why do some religions describe Allah and even prepare deities of the Lord?

Airavata Dasa: Of course, nobody can fully describe or even imagine the beauty of Allah. Because of this He descended to this earth and showed His Spiritual Form to people so that nobody would speculate or concoct how Allah looks.

Dr. Muhammad Ali - How is it possible that Allah came to this world? It is unbelievable!

Airavata Dasa: All things are possible by the will of Allah. In the Qur'an it is written that Allah is Almighty, if He so desires He can do anything according to His Supreme

Wish. If we think of something as impossible for Allah then that means we are putting limits to His powers. But besides this in the Hadith and the Qur'an there are direct evidences that Allah came to this earth.

There are millions of verses like this in the Vedic scriptures which describe the attributes of Allah. We can see that in the Qur'an a general description of the Supreme Image of Allah is given, but in the Vedas, the Supreme Image of Allah is described in much more detail. I have been fortunate enough to study both scriptures the Qur'an and the Vedas and I respectfully compare them to a small dictionary and a bigger dictionary. The small dictionary contains all the things which are there in the big dictionary, but the big dictionary has much more details and explanations.

Abu Hurairah said, "The Prophet said: Allah Almighty descends to the firmament of the world in the last third portion of every night."

There are the following verses in the Qur'an,

"See they not how We (Allah) visit the land, reducing it of its outlying parts? Can they then be the victor?" (21.44)

Only pure devotees can recognize Allah when He descends on this earth and then according to His features they prepare deities of the Lord. These deities of the Lord should be prepared by the pure devotees and worshipped according to revealed scriptures. If deities of the Lord are properly prepared, installed and worshipped, then the Lord enters His deities by His inconceivable potencies and then the deities, are non different from the Lord. If the procedure of preparation, installation and worship is not followed strictly by the guide lines in the scriptures then it is not authorized but is the greatly condemned idol worship which has no value but to take us towards degradation and hell. Any imaginary form is an idol and material. But the bonafide deities of the Lord are non-different from the Lord. On the Absolute level the Lord and His form are non different. In the material world the individual spirit soul is different from his material body, but God is nondifferent from His form. If the form of the Lord is prepared by the devotee according to the descriptions given by the bonafide scriptures, this bonafide deity is an exact presentation of God. This happens by the inconceivable potency and causeless mercy of the Lord. On the neophyte stage a devotee cannot perceive God by his materially contaminated senses. Therefore, the Lord manifests Himself in the deity form so that devotees can see Him, physically serve Him and establish a transcendental relationship with Him. The deity is the expansion of the original transcendental form of the Lord and nondifferent from Him.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: According to Muslim religion if a form of Allah is made and worshipped, an offense against Him is committed.

Airavata Dasa: In the Qur'an Hazrat Muhammad prohibited the worship of idols. He warned, don't worship anybody except Allah, but he never spoke about the form of Allah Himself. First of all, we must understand that Hazrat Muhammad received only a part of the knowledge from the heavenly book that is eternally preserved under the throne of Allah. Secondly, when Hazrat Muhammad ascended to the abode of Allah he received three kinds of knowledge from Him:

- 1) The knowledge that Allah ordered Muhammad to conceal;
- 2) The knowledge that Allah let Hazrat Muhammad choose whether he wished to conceal or reveal;
- 3) The knowledge which Allah ordered the Apostle to communicate to all members of the community.

Thus, Hazrat Muhammad received part of the eternal divine knowledge of which part he had to conceal.

When the messenger of God comes, he delivers knowledge according to time, place, circumstances and the intellectual capacities of the people. Once, the Apostle of God said, "Speak to the people according to their intellectual capacities. For if you speak all things to all men, some cannot understand you, and so fall into errors." Because the ancient Arabs worshipped idols and were degraded in many ways he did not mention anything about worshipping the deity form of Allah.

Once, in Mecca, Hazrat Muhammad recited certain verses which permitted the intercession of goddesses. One version of this is:

Did you consider *Al-Lat* and *Al-Uzza*
And *Al-Manat*, the third, the other?
Those are the swans exalted;
Their intercession is expected;
Their likes are not neglected.

He prostrated himself at the end of the discourse and the congregation also prostrated themselves.

When Hazrat Muhammad conquered Mecca he entered the structure of the Ka'ba. Inside there were many human representations on the walls. He ordered all of them to be effaced except for those of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus.

All these facts show us that actually Hazrat Muhammad accepted divine holy pictures and forms, but, practically, he completely rejected the worship of any form because of the degradation and ignorance of the ancient Arabs.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: According to Muslim religion, Allah's imaginary form is made by Satan and called *byut* (idol). The worship of this *byut* is strictly prohibited, and the worshipper becomes liable for punishment from Allah.

Airavata Dasa: Yes. Vedic scripture also condemns worshipping an imaginary form of God. One should not speculate and create idols. One should prepare bonafide deities of the Lord according to revealed scriptures and should worship the Lord by following the rules and regulations. Such bona fide deities of God are non-different from God. For instance, the picture of your father is non-different from your father. Whenever you see the picture of your father you think, "O, here is my father." Similarly, whenever devotees see the deity of the Lord they think, "O, here is my Lord". For the Supreme Lord there is no difference between His material and spiritual energies. He manifests Himself through the material energy in the form of the deity. As soon as the material elements assume the shape of God's deity they become spiritual and non different from the Lord. In this way God appears in the material world for the benefit of His devotees.

Allah by His inconceivable potency enters into His deity form out of His causeless mercy at the sincere prayers and request of His aspiring devotee, to further develop and enhance the relationship between them. What is impossible for us to even conceive is very easy for Allah. So according to the real motive of the person's heart Allah chooses to manifest or not. He may or may not assume a form by means of His inconceivable power. Allah factually has shape and has no shape simultaneously. This is part Allah's inconceivable ability. He is impersonal and personal at the same time. If we say He cannot have form, we are denying His inconceivable power. By dint of that power He takes forms for His devotees and performs eternal pastimes. For Him to enter into a deity is a very small and easy task. His Divine Deity is His Form of Transcendental consciousness.

Ink and wood are the substances used in making the deity of the Lord. Similarly the Qur'an is written by ink on paper made from wood pulp but no Muslim will disrespect it or consider it different from Allah Himself.

Just as the instructions of God cannot be considered separate from God, similarly, the deity of God is non-different from the Supreme Lord Himself. The Muslim worship the black stone as reverentially as he worship the Lord Himself. Actually, no sincere spiritual seeker will fail to offer all respect to depictions of sayings, activities, holy places of God and His devotees. God is Absolute. His name, fame, activities and form are all non-different from His own self.

Allah is named in the Qur'an as "*al-Muheet*" or all-pervading, omnipresent being.

"*Huwa al-awwal wa huwa al-akhir / wa huwa az-zahir wa huwa al-batin.*" - "He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is the Knower of all things." (57.3)

If one's vision is covered with ignorance, he cannot perceive God in His Deity form. In this way, he rejects the fact that Allah is omnipresent. One cannot say that God is everywhere but not in His Deity form. Such a statement is contradictory. Therefore, we cannot deny God's presence in the Deity. Consequently, worship of the Deity of God is prescribed in the Vedas.

We may not be able to see the spirit, but we can see the Deity in the temple. This helps us to focus our minds on God - on His original form until we are sufficiently pure and qualified to see Him spiritually. Since the Lord is Absolute, He is non-different from His Deity form in the temple. In this way He purifies all onlookers with His transcendental form.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Allah has a Divine Image, there is no doubt about that. But if you make a form of Allah, it becomes a material thing. We call that material thing *byut*, or idol. Worship of a material thing is not the same as worship of the Supreme Lord.

Airavata Dasa: According to Vedic scriptures, worshippers of matter ultimately go to matter. Worship of matter is severely condemned:

*yanti deva-vrata devan
pitri yanti pitri-vrata
bhutani yanti bhutejya
yanti mad-yajino 'pu mam*

"Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship the ancestors go to the ancestors; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; and those who worship Me (God) will live with Me (God)."

(Bhagavad-gita 9.25)

Of course, worship of a material thing is not the same as the worship of God. But if a devotee makes a bonafide deity of God and worships according to scriptural injunctions, then that deity is non-different from the Lord. That deity of God is not a material thing, it is the all-conscious transcendental form of the Lord. If some immature person thinks it is a statue, it will be only a statue for him. But when a person is sincerely seeking Allah and becomes purified enough, he can realize that it is Lord Himself standing in front of him and he can reciprocate with Allah through this deity. Until the devotees are mature enough to reciprocate with the Lord directly, the worship of the Deity of the Lord is highly recommended.

From the Vedic scriptures, the information on the personal features of God is obtained:

*venum kvanantam aravindam alayataksam
barhavatamsam asitambuda-sundarangam
kandarpa-koti-kamaniya-visesa-sobham
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami*

“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept in playing on His flute, who has blooming eyes like lotus petals, whose head is bedecked with a peacock feather, whose figure of beauty is tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and whose unique loveliness charms millions of Cupids.” (Brahma-samhita 30)

Keeping these descriptions in mind sometimes devotees worship forms which resemble the descriptions of God’s features but are carved out of metal, wood, marble, etc. For this reason, sometimes they are criticized for worshipping idols. But are they really worshipping idols?

In the Qur’an, Hazrat Muhammad exclaims,

“Allah forgives not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him. But He forgives whom He pleaseth other sins than this. One who joins others gods with Allah, hath strayed far, far away (from the right).

They invoke in His stead only females; they pray to none else than Satan, a rebel.” (4.116-117)

The idols which the pagan Arabs worshipped were generally female. The implication is that the ancient Arabs were fashioning idols of living entities other than Allah and worshipping them. However, there is no restriction on worshipping Allah’s form, but only on making an idol of other beings. This is also a restriction in the Vedic scriptures. The Supreme Lord says in the Bhagavad-gita (9.23):

*ye’py anya-devata-bhakta
yajante sraddhayanvitah
te’pi mam eva kaunteya
yajanty avidhi-purvakam*

“Whatever a man may sacrifice to other gods, O son of Kunti, is actually meant for Me alone, but it is offered without true understanding.”

It is propounded in the Qur’an (3.64):

“Say: O people of the scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall associate no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).”

On account of such verses we can clearly see that Allah is giving us instructions to stop worshipping forms of other beings. It is evident that Allah did not want the ancient Arabs to worship a form of other living beings, which was their tendency. But Allah never said, “Do not worship a form of Me.” Obviously, His restriction was more against worshipping other beings than making forms. Idol worship means worshipping someone other than the Supreme Lord. But people who worship the authorized Deity of the Supreme Lord are not idol worshippers. The Vedic scriptures confirms this by describing how the form of the Lord may be carved or constructed of wood, stone, metal, sand, clay, paint, jewels and mind, and thus be worshipped.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Is it not better to meditate within the mind upon Allah than to worship a form by means of a material object?

Airavata Dasa: Yes, that would be very nice providing we had an authorized form to put into our minds, but the mind being one of the material elements is in this age very much attached to matter and material sense gratification. So it has become a huge workshop constructing plans how to enjoy; all its thoughts are how to materially enjoy. Even if one meditates on Allah in his heart, he consequently imagines some concocted image or form which has material qualities. To take an earthen idol to be the divine form is as bad as meditation on a image within the heart which has been manufactured by the perverted mind. The mind is conditioned by this material environment and always thinks in the terms of material qualities. The mind is limited by time and space. Time and space are material factors. There is no such things as material time and space in the spiritual world. If meditation is not a thing beyond time and space, then how can you worship Allah who is beyond time and space? Condemning material things, you only imagine Allah within time and space. Mind is contaminated by material thoughts and attachments, is limited and is conditioned. To purify it we need transcendental means which are beyond material nature. Vedic scriptures recommend the chanting of the holy names of God, meditating on and worshipping the divine deities of the Lord which are as good as the Lord. The holy names of God and His divine deity are non-different from the Lord and are transcendental. When the mind becomes observed in the process of meditation on His form one is purified and spiritualized and one gets the opportunity to penetrate the limits of material nature and uplift himself to the spiritual realm. By meditation on the deity of the Lord and chanting His holy names the mind is purified. Only after complete purification of the mind can one meditate and worship God within the mind at any time, place and circumstances. In the Vedic scriptures it is called *manasa-puja* or worshipping in the mind. But this type of worship is a very advanced stage of devotional service and can be conducted only by one whose mind is completely free from all material desires and attachments. But for attaining this advance stage of God realization one should engage in the deity worship process.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Matter is distinct from God. It is said that Iblis (Satan) introduced the system of the worship of matter in order to trap man into attachment to material enjoyment and the material world.

Airavata Dasa: Matter nevertheless is one of the countless energies of the Lord. God is spiritual and all His energies are spiritual. God and His energies are simultaneously one and different. This particular energy, the material energy has been set up for those living entities who desired to be separated from the Lord. These living entities use this energy for their own sense enjoyment. But when they realize that they are eternal servitors of the Lord and start using this energy for the service of Allah then this energy immediately becomes spiritual. The same energy, if we use it for our own sense gratification, is dull matter, but if we use it for the service of Allah, it becomes spiritual. Just like electricity used in one way can produce heat and used in another way can produce cold. All things which come in contact with Allah, become spiritual, so if we take this energy and produce a Divine Deity of Allah according to the revealed scriptures, this Divine Deity of God is then non-different from Him. This Divine Deity is not *byut* or idol, it is no longer matter, it is a transcendental all-conscious manifestation of the Lord. It is one with the Lord and none different from Him. Try to understand with the example of the sun. The sunlight is not different from the sun. The sunlight represents the sun. When we see sunlight we understand the sun is here. Thus, sunlight is one with and not different from the sun. In the same way the Divine Deity of God is one with and not different from God. If someone with love and devotion

worships this Divine Deity of the Lord with the full realization that this is a pure representation of God then it is not different from the direct worship of God.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: I accept that if anyone worships God with a spirit of devotion, the worship of a divine Image is not an offense and not to be blamed, but if someone worships a fish, a tortoise, a serpent or some other such thing how can it be called worship of God? For example, the Hindus worship an ugly man with the head of an elephant and claim it to be God. Do you class this as worshipping our Lord?

Airavata Dasa: No! His name is Ganesha. He is an inhabitant of the heavens. He is not God. Those who claim he is God say it out of ignorance and a poor fund of knowledge. According to Vedic scriptures Ganesha is an angel not God. Ganesha means the one who takes away obstacles from the path of devotional service. Therefore devotees of the Lord respect him. Like Muslims respect the angel Gabriel, who was a medium between Allah and Hazrat Muhammad.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: But what about the worship of stones? Hindus also worship stones. I have seen it. Is this worship of God?

Airavata Dasa: Muslims also worship stones. You can also see this in Mecca. There are two stones in the Ka'ba, "*Hajar-al-asvad*" or "Holy black stone" and "*Makam Ibrahim*" with the footprints of the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). Muslims worship these two stones. Also all Muslims worship and pray towards the Ka'ba, the "House of Allah". We accept this is a spiritual, transcendental focal point for devotees but for the ignorant or disbelievers it's a material form in a shape of four walls, so if you accept this to be worship to Allah, what is the difficulty in accepting a deity form as a focal point for devotees.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: No, no, no. Muslims do not worship these stones, they offer their respects to these stones, because these are not ordinary stones.

Airavata Dasa: First of all, showing respect is also a form of worship. The Hindus do the same thing. They respect these stones because they remind them of God. There are particular stones in this material world which are called *shalagrama-shilas*. The Supreme Lord manifests Himself in this material world in the form of these stones. *Shalagrama-shila* is also black like *Hajar-al-asvad*. The *Shalagrama-shila* can be found only in one particular place on our planet - in the river bed of the Gandhaki river, in the Himalayas. This stone has special marks which distinguish it from all other stones. God, by His causeless mercy, manifests Himself in this form of a black stone just to accept the worship of His devotees. Worshipping *shalagrama-shila* does not require gorgeous paraphernalia which is compulsory in the case of deity worshipping. This is a more simple process.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Do Hindus also worship trees?

Airavata Dasa: Not any tree, but a particular tree. Her name is Tulasi. This tree is very dear to the Lord. That is why the devotees respect this tree very much. Like the guardian angel of Adam turned into a stone and fell to this planet, and now helps us to purify ourselves for the purpose of serving Allah. Similarly one exalted servant of the Lord turned into the Tulasi tree and came to this material world to help us develop God consciousness and progress in our devotional service to the Lord. Allah is very pleased when devotees cultivate the Tulasi tree, water it and circumambulate it.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Why do Hindus worship cows? This is idolatry.

Airavata Dasa: They definitely do not worship cows as God rather they respect cows, because cows give us a very important product - milk. From milk people can get ghee and other milk products which are very important for a healthy life. Not any milk but particularly cow milk if drunk hot develops the finer brain tissues which develops the memory by which people can remember and understand God. Because of this, scriptures recommend the protection of cows. Instead of killing them cows should be protected and respected, for they benefit human society. The cow is just like the mother. The mother gives milk to her child and the cow gives milk to humans. Therefore, the killing of cows and the eating of their flesh is as sinful as killing your own mother and eating her flesh.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: But the Qur'an allows the killing of the cows.

Airavata Dasa: No! I have never found any *ayat* in the Qur'an which allowed cow killing. Can you show me which verse in the Qur'an allows the killing of cows?

Dr. Muhammad Ali: No! Not exactly.

Airavata Dasa: In the Qur'an not a single verse allows the killing of cows and bulls. But a very clear instruction is given about what is intended as human food:

"And We (Allah) said: O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the garden, and eat ye freely of the fruits thereof where ye will." (2.35)

"And give glad tidings (O Muhammad) unto those who believe and do good works, that theirs are gardens underneath which rivers flow; as often as they are regaled with food of the fruit thereof." (2.25)

"Allah is He who created the heavens and the earth, and causeth water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you." (14.32)

From these three *ayats* of the Qur'an it is obvious that when Allah created Adam and Eve, He gave them the fruits for food. And when the pious go to paradise they will have fruits as their food. Then, when Allah created the earth He "produced fruits as food for" mankind. Also, from the very life of the Prophet of Islam, we can see that His daily food was bread, milk and palm-dates. Hazrat Muhammad often mentioned that Islam is to treat every living entity as equal to oneself. One of the first statements Hazrat Muhammad made on regaining Mecca was: "No one shall mistreat another. No one shall kill any animal, not even the cutting of a tree shall be allowed in Mecca."

For those who are really attached to eating meat, Allah allowed the sacrifice of animals such as sheeps, goats and camels. Such less important animals could be sacrificed at the proper place, by proper persons and in the proper way. Then the body of the animal should be divided into seven parts and distributed to the poor people and remnants could be eaten for the self. Only then it can be classed as *halal* or "lawful", otherwise it is *haram*, or "unlawful". So less important animals could be sacrificed and eaten in the authorized way. The result of following this procedure is that lusty desires for flesh eating will diminish and a person will then start eating only pure foodstuffs like fruits, grain and vegetables which are actually intended for human beings by Allah. Allah allowed sacrificial meat but not the opening of slaughterhouses where thousands of innocent animals are killed just to satisfy the tongue. It is very sinful and brings a degradation to the whole human society.

Dr. Muhammad Ali - Hindus also claim that after death some people become animals. How is this possible?

Airavata Dasa: All things are possible by the will of Allah. In the Qur'an there are some very interesting verses which prove this. In the 65th *ayat* of 2nd *sura* it is said,

"And well ye knew those amongst you who broke the Sabbath, how We said to them: Be ye apes, despised and rejected!"

Also in the 60th *ayat* of 5th *sura*:

"Those who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath, those of whom some He transformed into apes and swine."

So, those who live like animals become animals. It is the law of God. Just like we can see in this world criminals are moved to live amongst criminals. But we should understand one thing clearly about this phenomenon. It is not that a human body turns into an animal body, but that the soul is forced to accept a new body according to his past activities. At the time of death, the *ruh*, or "soul", gives up this body and under the strict laws of Allah has to enter a new body according to his consciousness developed in his last life. And he will receive his next body according to his consciousness developed in this life. So right now we are dictating what will happen to us in our next life. The Bible also confirms: "As you sow so shall you reap" and "What goes around, comes around." This is the only way we can understand and accept that Allah is supremely fair and just when we try to analyze why one soul is born into a rich and comfortable life and another soul is born into complete misery, starvation and early death. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita (8.6):

*yam yam vapi smaran bhavam
tyajaty ante kalevaram
tam tam evati kaunteya
sada tad-bhava-bhavitah*

"Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail." But to understand what we remember in our dying seconds is dictated to us by our attachments in that life so the real question is how much are we attached to Allah or attached to this material world.

Dr. Muhammad Ali - But how is this changing of bodies possible?

Airavata Dasa: There is nothing special in this. It happens every day. Your body of yesterday is not your body of today. Once you were a child. Now you are a grown man. Where is your childhood body? That body does not exist, but you still exist because you are eternal. The circumstantial body has changed, but you have not changed.

In the Bhagavad-gita (2.13) Lord Krishna explains:

*dehino 'smin yatha dehe
kaumaram yauvanam jara
tatha dehantara-praptir
dhiras tatra na muhyati*

"As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change."

Just as this body is always changing, there is a similar change at the time of death. Medical science says that all the bodily cells are replaced every seven years. This means that after every seven years the living entity gets a completely new body. If a man lives for hundred years he will have changed his body thirteen times. When this bodily machine becomes old and can no longer function, the living entity leaves that

body, like a driver leaves his old and useless car and accepts a new one. In the Bhagavad-gita (2.22) this is explained as follows:

*vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya
navani grihnati naro parani
tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany
anyani samyati navani dehi*

“As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.”

Dr. Muhammad Ali: According to Hindu philosophy Allah enters into everyone’s hearts. Are there any proofs about this in the Qur'an?

Airavata Dasa: Yes. There are many verses about this in the Qur'an. I shall read you several of them.

"Lo! He (Allah) is Hearer, Nigh." (34.50)

"We (Allah) are nearer to him than his jugular vein." (50.16)

"And We (Allah) are nearer unto him than ye are, but ye see not." (56.85)

"He (Allah) is Knower of all that is in the breasts." (57.6)

"Know that Allah cometh in between the man and his own heart." (8.24)

First of all we must admit that Allah is all-pervasive, He is Omnipresent and by His inconceivable powers He enters in the hearts of every living being and guides them. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita (15.15) by the Supreme Lord Himself:

*sarvasya chaham hridi sannivishtho
mattah smritir jnanam apohanam cha*

“I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness.”

The Supreme Lord is situated as the Supersoul in everyone’s heart, and it is from Him that all activities are initiated. The living entity forgets everything of his past life, but he has to act according to the direction of the Supreme Lord, who is witness to all his activities. Therefore, he begins his work according to his past deeds. The required knowledge is supplied, and remembrance is given to him. Forgetfulness about his past life is also arranged by the Lord. Thus, the Lord is not only all-pervading; He is also localized in every individuals heart. Just like two birds (the soul and the Supersoul) sitting on one tree (the material body), the individual soul, me or you are trying to enjoy the fruits of this tree but the Supersoul simply witnesses and awards the reactions of such work which comes in the form of temporary misery or happiness. The living entity forgets his deeds as soon as he quits his present body, but he begins his work again, initiated by the Supreme Lord. Although he forgets, the Lord gives him the intelligence to renew his work at the level where he ended his last life. So not only does a living entity enjoy or suffer in this world according to the dictation from the Supreme Lord situated in the heart, but he receives the opportunity to understand the spiritual knowledge from Him too.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: When I was in India I saw that Hindus at the time of worshipping God sung songs. But singing is sensual. Why do they then sing?

Airavata Dasa: Singing for ones own sense gratification is sensual like the world is drowned in now. But if someone sings prayers for the pleasure of God it is spiritual.

After all our position as servant of God is to glorify Him. Muslims also sing Qur'anic verses.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: But they do not use musical instruments.

Airavata Dasa: With instruments or without instruments is not the point. The main point is to sing for the pleasure of God. If someone chants the holy names of God with love and devotion, that brings pleasure to God. In the Qur'an Allah said,

"Praise the name of thy Lord the most High." (87.1)

"The most beautiful names belong to Allah. Invoke Him by them." (7.180)

"Call upon *Allah* (Supreme), or call upon *Rahman* (Beneficent), by whatever name ye call upon Him (it is well). For to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Neither speak the prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a middle course between." (17.110)

This is the most important instruction of Allah. All revealed scriptures confirm this. For spiritual advancement in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy there is no other way, there is no other way, there is no other way than to chant the names of God, to chant the names of God, to chant the names of God. It does not matter what you call yourself - Muslim, Christian, Jew or Hindu - just chant the holy names of God, Allah and be happy. Young, old, white, black, a professor, a housewife, the president or a student, everyone can do it. It's free and available to everyone. So please, our request is that you chant the name of Allah. You chant the Holy name of God. If Allah is approved name of God, you chant it. That is our humble request.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Thank you very much. Now many things have become clear to me. I have also got a better understanding of the verses from the Qur'an specially where the Apostle of God said, we make no distinction between messengers. Where is it?

Airavata Dasa: In the 2nd *sura*, "Each one believeth in Allah and His angels, and His scriptures and His messengers - we make no distinction between any of His messengers," verse 285. In different ages different messengers of God come and deliver the same knowledge according to time, place, circumstances and the level of people's understanding. It is the same knowledge, but shaped to fit different culture according to time, place and circumstances, and presented in different languages. The main instruction for this difficult time is to chant the holy names of God with love and devotion. It does not matter which names and in which languages. By this people will attain peace and prosperity. This is the peace formula for the whole universe.

Dr. Muhammad Ali: Thank you, thank you very much.

PART THREE

Prophet Muhammad and Bhakti-yoga

Another dark phase of communal riots has just added itself to the sad but true history of India. "Why" and "how" are the questions everybody ponders on. Hindus see the Muslims as aliens and Muslims understand themselves as a victimized minority. It's not a hidden reality, everyone can see and feel the tension of suspicion hovering around them. Is this what a Hindu God or a Muslim God wants? God cannot be sectarian, belonging to one side or sect. He is foremost the Supreme and He is One.

No one is equal to Him or greater than Him. So, for any believer of God, if you really understand who God is, you will also understand that God cannot be just for the Muslims or just for the Hindus. God no matter what name you personally choose to call Him, is our Creator, our Provider and our Maintainer. God is with every individual soul, that there is no doubt. This article is all about uniting mankind under the flag of consciously understanding God has many names but He is One. In ignorance of this scientific fact men are foolishly creating more suffering and misery for each other. Our efforts to reverse this tide will not be whimsical or political, but by spiritual insight into all religions, we can try to humbly help mankind understand the real purpose of each and every religion.

The greatest Vedic scholar in this century was His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, and through his immensely popular spiritual books, he has given us the insight into the union of all religions. The followers of Srila Prabhupada have a saying that says, "He has built a house in which the whole world can live", and such a "house" exists right here, it's called the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Srila Prabhupada once said, "Hazrat Muhammad, the inaugurator of Islam religion; I accept him as an empowered servant of God because he preached God consciousness in those parts of the world and induced them to accept the authority of God. He is accepted as the servant of God and we have all respect for him." Again Srila Prabhupada said, "Hazrat Muhammad, a powerful devotee of the Lord, has done tremendous service on behalf of the Lord on the surface of the globe."

Between Muslims and Hindus there's a major point of diversion, that is Hindus worship deities which is seems like condemned by Hazrat Muhammad in the Qur'an. So we will analyze this point. To do so let us go back in history for a study of the ancient Arabs. We see the horrible customs and rituals. Ghastly sacrifices in the name of worship and spiritually illegal manufacture and worship of imaginary idols. In all this pandemonium Hazrat Muhammad, the messenger of God, appeared. His purpose in such a degraded environment was to establish the one and only Supreme God and end this whimsical idol worshipping. Every messenger of God preaches according to time, place and circumstances. Hazrat Muhammad confirms this by saying, "Speak to people according to the level of their intellectual capacities" and he did just that. (*Just a peep into the Muslim mind*. A. M. Allapichai, Madras, 1946) In this regard, Srila Prabhupada in Geneva, 1974 explained, "Hazrat Muhammad also said: "From this day, there is no sex with your mother." So just see what class of man. So according to class of man, there should be teaching." Following verse from the Qur'an confirm Srila Prabhupada's statement: "Forbidden unto you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters ..." (4.23) Therefore, when Hazrat Muhammad saw the prevailing imaginary idol worshipping he asked to stop worshipping any type or kind of images, sculptures and pictures. He openly never said of the form of God, but he has given in some places of the Qur'an, as if hidden, some clues to the form of God. Just like Buddha, who appeared in India at a time when people were misinterpreting the Vedas and unauthorisingly performing sacrifices for their own sense gratification. To stop all this Buddha preached the philosophy of *ahimsa*, which means non-violence to all living entities. He asked his followers to reject Vedic injunctions. Similarly, we find that Hazrat Muhammad preached according to time, place and circumstances.

From the book, *The messenger* by R. V. C. Bodley we get an important instance from the life of Hazrat Muhammad. When Hazrat Muhammad conquered Mecca and entered Ka'ba, he ordered the destruction of all the idols there. At that time there were paintings on the walls, including pictures of the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus in her arms. The important point to note is that Hazrat Muhammad ordered to

erase all the paintings except those depicting Jesus and his mother. It is said that, Hazrat Muhammad placed his hands over this picture and so saved it from destruction. (*Muhammad and the rise of Islam*. D. S. Margoliouth, New Delhi, 1985 and *Muhammad and the course of Islam*. H. M. Balyuzi, Oxford, 1976)

In the early days of the Prophet Muhammad's preaching in Mecca he had a revelation which apparently permitted the intercession of the most honorable goddesses. One version of this is:

Did you consider *Al-Lat* and *Al-Uzza*
And *Al-Manat*, the third, the other?
Those are the swans exalted;
Their intercession is expected,
Their likes are not neglected.

(*Muhammad: Prophet and statesman*.
Montgomery Watt, London, 1961)

After this discourse Hazrat Muhammad prostrated himself, and the congregation prostrated also. (*Muhammad and the rise of Islam*. D. S. Margoliouth, New Delhi, 1985; *The Life of Mohammad from original sources*. A. Sprenger M. D., Allahabad, 1851 and *Mohammed, the man and his faith*. Theophil Menzel, London, 1956)

These facts taken from Hazrat Muhammad's life show us that inwardly Hazrat Muhammad accepted holy picture, images, and deity worship but outwardly due to time, place and circumstances rejected them. In this regard, Srila Prabhupada says, "When our constitutional position or *dharma* is deteriorated due to the contaminations of matter, the Lord Himself comes as an incarnation or sends some of His confidential servitors. Lord Jesus Christ called himself the "son of God," and so is a representative of the Supreme. Similarly, Hazrat Muhammad identified himself as a servant of the Supreme Lord. Thus whenever there is a discrepancy in our constitutional position, the Supreme Lord either comes Himself or sends His representative to inform us of the real position of the living entity." So from the authority of Vedic literature we can understand that due to the degradation of religious principles among the people of Arabia, Hazrat Muhammad was sent by Allah, the Supreme Lord, to establish the true religion and stop all the imaginary idol worshipping prevailing at that time. But this does not mean Hazrat Muhammad himself rejected authorized deity worships, and this we will find out as fact when we closely examine the life of Hazrat Muhammad.

In this regard, according to the Muslim tradition, Hazrat Muhammad once had *miraj* (ascending) to heaven and after penetrating the 7th layer of heaven, he attended the Throne of Allah. This was the occasion when Hazrat Muhammad received the divine knowledge from Allah. This divine knowledge received by Hazrat Muhammad is of three kinds:

- 1) The knowledge that Allah ordered Hazrat Muhammad to conceal;
- 2) The knowledge that Allah let him choose whether to conceal or reveal;
- 3) The knowledge which Allah ordered the Apostle to communicate to all members of the *ummah* (community). (Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and his ascension. Geo Widengren, Uppsala, 1955)

So we can understand that Hazrat Muhammad received a part of knowledge and at the same time Hazrat Muhammad was asked to conceal some part of this knowledge. Still Hazrat Muhammad has given us many hints to understand Allah and His form. When Hazrat Muhammad ascended to heaven and met Allah, Allah was sitting on the throne. When people asked Hazrat Muhammad: "Have you seen Allah?" The Apostle answered: "I saw only light, a light so intense that Allah sat

behind 20,000 curtains. If these curtains were to be removed and someone were to see the face of Allah he would immediately be burned to ashes. (*Peygambara 40 sual. Bilik*, Baku, 1993)

When Hazrat Muhammad stood in front of Allah he felt reassured, but He found it hard to stand his ground when Allah stretched out His hands and placed one on his shoulder and the other on his chest. An icy chill froze his bones and his blood. Then the coldness faded and was succeeded by an ecstatic bliss which seemed to carry Muhammad out of his body into a state of being so marvelous that it was impossible to describe. (*The messenger*. R. V. C. Bodley, New York, 1946)

One close associate of Hazrat Muhammad, *Muadh-bin-Jabal* said: "The Prophet on one occasion, hindered our saying the morning prayers till we were near seeing the sun, then he hastened out of his house, and the *Tacbir* (prayer) was called aloud, then the Prophet said prayers in haste, and when he had repeated the *Salam*, he said, "Sit in your places, and I will inform you the cause of my being so late this morning. I got up early, and performed the *Wadu* (purification), and said prayers, agreeably to the wishes of Allah, and I felt drowsy in my prayers, after which I awoke, and all of a sudden I saw my Creator in a most lovely form, and He said, "O! Muhammad!" I said, "What do You command?" He said, "What do the angels argue about?" I said, "I do not know." Then I saw my God put the palm of his hand between my two shoulders till I felt my breast cold; then everything in the world appeared clear before me, and I knew the whole. Again He asked about disputations of the angels. I replied, "They dispute about deeds which cover sin." (*Mishcat-ul-Masabih*. Calcutta, 1809)

It is recorded in tradition from *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, that once the Prophet of Islam said, "*Allah-Taala* (God Most High) created Adam in His own *sura* (form, image)." (*The idea of personality in Sufism*. Reynold A. N. Delhi, 1976 and *Love of God*. Mir Valiuddin, Delhi, 1968)

From the quoted description it is clear that Allah is supreme transcendental Person and has a spiritual Form.

Let us also see what is the opinion of prominent Muslim scholars.

The author of *Jowhara* (p.107-112) says: "It is possible to see Allah in this world as well as in the next. In this world it has been granted to Hazrat Muhammad only. In the future world however all believers will see Him; some say only His eyes, others say His whole face, others say every part of His body. (*The religion of Islam*. Klein F. A., Delhi, 1987)

Many Muslims on the basis of Qur'anic verses: (48.10); (25.60); (7.52); (10.3); (32.3); (11.9); (57.4); (75.22-23); (22.60 and 74); (31.27); (42.9); (58.1) believed that Allah posses a head, mouth, eyes, ears, hands and feet just like those of a human being. In the opinion of *Abu Mo'ammam ol-Hodhali*, a preacher at Baghdad, anyone who denied this belief was an infidel. Adherents of the school of the famous traditionist and lawyer *Ahmad b. Hanbal* have the same opinion. The school's chief later exponent, *Ahmad b. Taymiya*, called the *Mo'tazelites* infidels and *Ghazzali* a heretic; on one celebrated occasion, after quoting the Qur'an in a sermon, he said to the congregation as he stepped down from the pulpit of the great mosque at Damascus, "Allah will step down from His throne in the same way as I am stepping down from this pulpit." (*Twenty three years*. Ali Dasthi, London, 1985)

Abu' Amer ol-Qorashi, a Moor from Majorca declared that it was heretical to understand the sentence, "There is nothing similar to Him (Allah)" in the Qur'an 42.9 as meaning what it says; it means, in his opinion, that nothing resembles Allah in respect of His divinity, because "Allah possesses limbs and organs like yours and mine." As proof of God's possession of such limbs and organs, *Abu' Amer ol-Qorashi*

cited the description of the Last Judgment in (Qur'an 68.42), and then slapped his thigh and said, "Allah has legs just like mine." (*Twenty three years*. Ali Dasthi, London, 1985) These descriptions given by many respected Muslims can be like the conclusion of our discussion, that God is the Supreme Person and He has a Form, just like us, but of a divine transcendental nature.

For God to be God, he has to be perfect and complete. To be complete, God has to have everything. If God has no form, He would be incomplete (which He is not). Therefore God has a form. To be perfect God also has to be omnipresent. He has to be present throughout the entire creation. He is actually present in all living beings, in all nonliving objects - in stones and atoms too. Thus, it follows that God has an eternal form, a personality, and is present everywhere.

To further strengthen the relationship between Qur'anic teaching and Vedic teaching we will look into the process of worshipping God or as it's otherwise known the processes of devotional service to Allah. So, according to the Vedic scriptures there are nine limbs or aspects of pure devotional service to the Lord:

1. Hearing the holy name, qualities and glories of the Lord;
2. Chanting the holy name and glories of the Lord;
3. Remembering the Lord;
4. Serving the Lord;
5. Worshipping the Lord;
6. Praying to the Lord;
7. Obeying the orders of the Lord;
8. Maintaining friendship with the Lord;
9. Surrendering everything unto Him.

We will be surprised if we compare these Vedic descriptions of the nine processes of the spiritual life with the teaching of the Qur'an. Because we will see that both talk of the same things. So the Qur'an states:

1. Hearing

"When My servants question you concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he cries unto Me. So let them hear My call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright." (2.186)

2. Chanting

"So chant the name of your Tremendous Lord." (69.52)

3. Remembering

"Who have believed and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest!" (13.28)

4. Serving

"Behold! Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So serve Him. That is the right path." (19.36)

5. Worshipping

"O mankind! Worship your Lord, Who has created you and those before you so that you may ward off (evil)." (2.21)

6. Praying

"Seek help in patients and prayers. Truly, it is hard save for the humble-minded." (2.45)

7. Obeying

"Obey Allah and the messenger, that you may find mercy." (3.132)

8. Maintaining friendship

"Whoever takes Allah and His messenger, and those who believe for friends, behold! The party of Allah, they are the victorious." (5.56)

9. Surrendering

"Behold! Religion with Allah (is) the surrender (to His will and guidance)." (3.19)

From the above quotations we can see that the process of the devotional service to the Lord or bhakti-yoga mentioned in the Vedas is also mentioned in the Qur'an. There are millions of verses like this in the Vedic scriptures which describe devotional service in all details. It is just like the small dictionary and the big dictionary. Small dictionary contains all the things which there are in the big dictionary, but the big dictionary has much more details. So, we can say that Hindu devotees follow the same path as the devout Muslims are. In words of Srila Prabhupada, "Muslims are also Vaishnavas, devotees, because they offer prayers to the Lord. "O God," they say, "give us our daily bread." Those who offer this prayer may not know very much and may be at a neophyte stage, but this is a beginning, because they have approached God. Going to a mosque is also pious. Therefore those who begin in this way will one day become pure Vaishnavas." Again Srila Prabhupada says, "Even the Muslim religion. That is also bhakti-yoga. Any religion where God is the target, that is applied in bhakti", "Bhakti-yoga also exists among the Muslims, because God is the target in the Muslim religion."

Finally we can conclude the section by quoting Srila Prabhupada where he says, "If you find that following some religious principles you are developing your love of God, then it is perfect. It doesn't matter whether it is Bible or Qur'an or Bhagavad-gita, it doesn't matter."

PART FOUR

Spiritual power of bhakti-yogi

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the greatest bhakti-yogi, Vaishnava, a pure devotee of Lord Krishna, got order from his spiritual master, Bhaktisidhanta Saraswati Thakura, to spread Krishna consciousness in the English speaking world. After translating and publishing the first canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam into English, he went to America in 1965. He started his preaching activity by distributing the Srimad Bhagavatam and chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. He started chanting Hare Krishna in Tompkins Square Park, New York City. The transcendental sound vibration of Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* captured the hearts of the Americans. Many people joined him and they started chanting and dancing in ecstasy. After a while Srila Prabhupada registered the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. It was the beginning of the spreading of Krishna Consciousness in the Western world. After establishing *Bhagavata Dharma* in America Srila Prabhupada began traveling and spreading Krishna Consciousness in every corner of our planet. In 1971 Srila Prabhupada went to Moscow, Russia. He met there a Russian indologist, Prof. Kotovski, and discussed with him the real meaning of Vedic literature. But the Communist government did not allow him to conduct public lectures. They were afraid of the pure devotee of Lord Krishna. Despite this one Russian boy became his first initiated disciple in Russia. This boy associated with Srila Prabhupada for only two days. But because it was *sadhu-sanga*, association with pure a devotee of the Lord, the heart of Russian boy was cleansed. He was purified and became Lord Krishna's devotee. Srila Prabhupada instructed him to chant Hare Krishna, follow the principles of *bhakti-yoga* and spread Krishna Consciousness to Russians. Thus, by the causeless

mercy of a Vaishnava, the timeless message of Lord Krishna began to spread in countries of former USSR.

In 1975 Srila Prabhupada went to Tehran, Iran, to preach to Muslims. He explained to Muslims the meaning of *bhakti*, devotional service to the Lord. Srila Prabhupada very expertly showed that there was no difference between the message given in the Bhagavad-gita and the Qur'an. He told his Muslim audience that it did not matter which name of God they chanted. He said, "If you like, you can chant Allah, but we request you that you chant God's name. This name is authorized because Hazrat Muhammad said that you chant "Allah". So it is authorized, because he is God's representative. Therefore, our request is that you chant the name of Allah. You chant the Holy name of God. If Allah is a approved name of God, you chant it. We don't force you to chant the name of Krishna. No, we don't say that. If somebody says Jehovah is the name of God, that's all right, you chant Jehovah. Allah is the name of God, that's all right, you do it. We simply request that you chant the holy name of God. That's all. We don't force anyone to chant the name Krishna. That is not our way. We accept: if Allah is God's name, it is as good as the name "Krishna". We are not so sophisticated that you have to chant this Krishna's name." In this way Srila Prabhupada explained to Muslims the *yuga-dharma*, religious process meant for this age of Kali, age of quarrel, hypocrisy and degradation. *Yuga-dharma* for our age is *sankirtana-yajna*, congregational chanting of the holy names of God. Many Muslims, inspired and purified by Srila Prabhupada's words became his initiated disciples, devotees of Lord Krishna.

After that Srila Prabhupada went in Nairobi, Africa. He preached the universal message of Lord Krishna to black as well as the white population of Africa. Srila Prabhupada explained that it does not matter whether you are black or white. Soul is spiritual, eternal and different from the material body. Despite this bodily covering, we are all servant of the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna. Many Africans, being enlightened by Srila Prabhupada's words, became his followers.

In 1976 Bhagavad-gita As It Is with Srila Prabhupada's explanations was translated into Chinese for the first time. Disciples of Srila Prabhupada started broadcasting teaching of Lord Krishna to Chinese people. This was possible by the causeless mercy of their spiritual master. Very soon a temple was established in Hong Kong, and Chinese people, who form 1/3 of the population of our planet got the opportunity to relieve themselves from the pains of material existence and go back home, back to Godhead.

Once, in Vrindavana one mystic yogi came to see Srila Prabhupada. He tried to demonstrate his mystic power by showing miracles. Then he asked Srila Prabhupada, "Can you show any miracle?" Srila Prabhupada pointed to his disciples and replied, "That is my miracle." Actually, Srila Prabhupada converted *mlechhas* and *yavanas*, low class people, into devotees of Lord Krishna. Who can do it? Unless a being is empowered by God nobody can do it. That is mystic power of a Vaishnava, a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord. He does not need any exercise, or meditation for receiving mystic power. Lord Krishna gave to His devotee all necessary mystic power and *siddhas*. A pure devotee has no need to make a separate endeavor for attaining mystic powers. By dint of his devotional service he get everything. The Supreme Lord says in the Bhagavad-gita (6.46-47), "A yogi is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances, be a yogi. And of all yogis, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshipping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all."

Today, disciples, grand-disciples and followers of Srila Prabhupada are continuing very successfully to spread the mission, which he started. I was a student of National Economy at the Moscow Institute when I first met the devotees in Moscow. They invited me to their flat and introduced Srila Prabhupada's books and pictures. They told me about ISKCON's preaching activity and the bhakti-yoga process. I was familiar with Vedic literature as I already practiced Hatha-Yoga, but Srila Prabhupada's books impressed me very much. The devotees also entertained me with *prasadam* (food offered to Lord Krishna) and introduced me to the altar of the Lord. Then they started chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. The transcendental sound vibrations of Hare Krishna captured my heart. I started regular chanting of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* from the very next day. At this time I was staying in a student hostel. A big 22 story building with about 4,000 inhabitants. I started preaching Krishna Consciousness in our hostel and institute. In our hostel we had a big hall. I invited students and teachers there to preach to them about Vedic philosophy, to teach them to chant Hare Krishna and to distribute *prasadam*. Many people enthusiastically accepted Krishna Consciousness and began to practice the bhakti-yoga process. After a while Srila Prabhupada's books appeared in the Russian for the first time. We started printing and distributing them underground. It was Communist days and any religious activity, especially preaching was forbidden - what to speak of printing religious books. Underground book printing was punishable by 10 years imprisonment. When a community of devotees grew up and spread in Moscow, Leningrad, Riga and other cities of former USSR, KGB (Russian secret police) took action. They started persecution of ISKCON devotees. Many devotees including myself were imprisoned. After a while the KGB exiled me to my native place in Baku, Azarbaijan. There I became a teacher at the National Economy Institute. It was a nice opportunity for preaching and establishing Krishna Consciousness in this Muslim part of former USSR. I began preaching to my students and colleagues. Many of them accepted Krishna Consciousness. I started translating Srila Prabhupada's books into Azarbaijan language, printing them underground and distributing them. Soon the KGB noticed my preaching activities. They requested me to stop preaching and warned me that I will be imprisoned. That inspired me even more. I continued with more enthusiasm. When we were about to form the community and to register a society, the KGB imprisoned me again and then forced me to go to military service. For military service they sent me somewhere in the mountains, trying to isolate me from the society. But I continued my preaching activity. I introduced Krishna Consciousness to the officers and soldiers. Several times I was imprisoned and kept in isolation in the soldiers prison. But some senior officers became favorable to Krishna Consciousness and finally I got opportunity to establish an *ashram* in the barrack. I presented the teaching of the Bhagavad-gita, chanted Hare Krishna and distributed *prasadam*. Many soldiers and some officers accepted Krishna Consciousness despite many impediments of military service. When the term of my military service was over I returned to Baku, Azarbaijan and started translating Bhagavad-gita in Azarbaijan language. But distributing Srila Prabhupada's books was very difficult. First of all, because Azarbaijan is a Muslim country and, secondly, because people are not so inclined to read and were not at all familiar with Vedic literatures. In order to increase book distribution and to give people the proper understanding of the purport of the Vedic literature, I wrote a book *The Bhagavad-gita and the Qur'an*. After we distributed about 10,000 copies of *The Bhagavad-gita and the Qur'an* people became more and more inclined to buy Srila Prabhupada's books. Some people even said, "The Bhagavad-gita is the ancient Qur'an." In this way we increased the book distribution. Finally, after a long struggle we registered ISKCON and opened a temple in Baku. Azarbaijan was the first Muslim

country where ISKCON was officially registered. During this time I started to contemplate preaching in Turkey. I reprinted one of Srila Prabhupada's books in Turkish and started to distribute them among Turkish tourists. After establishing ISKCON in Azarbaijan I headed for Turkey and started preaching Krishna Consciousness in Istanbul. Preaching to Muslims is not an easy task, but by Krishna's mercy everything is possible. Generally, people in Turkey are very suspicious and the government forbids religious preaching. After two years of difficulties, struggle and constant endeavor we were successful in opening a temple. For the first time the Bhagavad-gita As It Is with Srila Prabhupada's explanations was published in the Turkish language. For the future, we plan to distribute Krishna Consciousness in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt. We hope that by the blessings of Srila Prabhupada, a pure representative of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Krishna Consciousness will be spread to all the Muslim countries in the world.